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THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

A DISSERTATION

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Dedicated to

My Father-Mother Land,

Egedde,

Agbaja-Na-Ngwo

PREFACE

This work has been prompted and animated by my deepest concern for a universal well-being of all the nations of the world. I am encouraged by that energy in all of us, which moves us to combine together and to will to make this well-being a practical reality. Our human capacity for understanding one another is still present and operative, hence we can recapture our authentic human values, and regain our true human image that has been shattered by the study of man which has up to now been excessively modeled after the exact sciences. In other words, if the beings of the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the divine worlds "accept" man as man, there is good sense in arguing that in the human world, there should be a similar acceptance. Human relations and interactions should go beyond mere economic transactions (in which man is to man nothing more than a convenient good) to that higher and more fundamental level in which we are persons one to another. As persons we command respect and mutual recognition of one another as freedoms. It is imperative, therefore, that we acknowledge and appreciate the limitations of scientific objectifications of man in which the dimensions of freedom, personality and mutual recognition are reduced to "the behavior patterns of an organism in reaction to its physical environment." With the activity of understanding, we as persons can create a new and healthy humane horizon within which every man and woman may not just merely subsist and exist but truly "live" in a fashion proper to his or her humanity. Moreover, we must come to realize that our national cultural differences are possible precisely because we converge in that which encompasses every nation and all nations together, namely, in Transcendence Itself, from whom we all derive our mode of beings as persons. As persons and nations arising from and existentially rooted in Transcendence, we already have an irreversible common point of reference. Man has only to bring this frame of reference to practical consciousness and those barriers of detachment and disinterest between peoples will dissolve and genuine social and political understanding emerge and yield true, meaningful, and harmonious living in the world. Although this project of new understanding might begin with any culture, I shall undertake to give a hermeneutic of the African Traditional Culture, because it seems to be the least understood.

In the process of carrying out this project, my life has been enriched by the thoughtful and gracious assistance of many persons to whom I am indebted beyond measure. The Jesuit University of Boston College has fully sponsored my years of academic research in the United States; to this institution I remain grateful, and I gladly identify myself with her. My indebtedness to her Department of Philosophy

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cannot be adequately expressed. However, a few names deserve special mention. Professors Joseph Flanagan and Richard Stevens were noble-hearted in guiding, counseling and directing this work. Professors Norman Wells, Joseph Navickas, Peter Kreeft, Joseph Owens, Olivia Blanchette, John Rock, David Rasmussen, Thomas Blakeley, Joseph Casey, and William Haggerty have all contributed their philosophical wisdom and sustained me with their encouragement. Our good secretaries, Julie D'Andrea and Louise Dietenhofer, have been most understanding and helpful.

For sustained support in several ways, I am sincerely obligated to Reverends Edmund Walsh, Joseph Sullivan, John Keilty, Innocent Onyewuenyi, Thomas Fleming, Patrick Clarke, Edward Hanrahan, Robert Braunreuther, Leo McDonough (R.I.P.) and Daniel Finn.

My special benefactors, Michael and Betty Heffernan, merit a special dissertation devoted to their loving liberality towards me. In this category, I do not forget to express my gratitude to Sister Mary Ignatius, Tom and Susan Welsh, Mrs. Anness McCarthy (R.I.P.), Eddy and Laura McMullin, Ivy Beckles and Joyce Burnett, Lee Heinmets, Joseph and Yvonne Egwuonwu, and Mike and Theresa Nwankwo-Cukwuemaka.

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Emehelu and His Grace, Archbishop Francis Arinze, for their unflagging interest and encouragement. Finally, I would like it to be understood that the above-mentioned names represent also those many others who have been deeply kind to me but whose names I cannot mention simply because of limitations of space.

Innocent I. Egbujie

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INTRODUCTION

The Western scientific and technological devices, such as radios, televisions, jet aircraft, and satellites, have made the physical world of nations into a village. Nations are no longer, from a physical point of view, very distant from one another. But this physical proximity does not necessarily imply human, moral or spiritual nearness of nations. Wars, conflicts, and unpeace abound today among the nations of the world. That being so, this physical nearness is analogous to skeletal bones without flesh. It is pure matter without form, a body without soul, a pure potency. This situation constitutes a challenge to philosophy made by science and technology. Philosophy must attempt to fill the skeleton with flesh, 'inform' the matter, breathe soul and spirit into the body, and activate the potency by creating and introducing well-grounded understanding among the peoples of the world.

Consequently, we now undertake to face that challenge proposed by the sciences to philosophy. We want to explain and interpret the African culture so as thereby to blend the African sense of values with that of the rest of the world at large. Africans have values for the world, men, and Transcendence or God, which we judge would be enriching to world-community. If the physical Africa is now techno-

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logically so near, say to the Americans, African values and meanings about life in general must also be brought closer. Mutual understanding will be made possible only by an empathetic "fusion" of different horizons of meaning.

Philosophy aims at the comprehension of the 'whole.' True philosophizing must not ignore any part for without proper understanding of each part, the 'whole' is simply not available. Africa is a part of the world. She has, therefore, a contribution to make to the common store of world meanings if the uniqueness of her cultural self-understanding is properly articulated. It is through the hermeneutics of her culture, in which reside all her existential meanings, that Africa will be fully or better understood, an understanding which will promote her acceptance and recognition by others of the human family.

Being as such, which is the ultimate and perennial goal of philosophy's search, discloses itself through the mediation of man, himself one among the various existents of beings of the universe. However, existence is viewed in varied ways by different peoples of the world. A philosopher's approximation of truth in the quest of Being becomes even richer when he listens to those varied ways in which people have conceived existence, beings and Being. By a hermeneutic of the African Traditional Culture, we propose to begin to make available the Africans' sense of Being.

Is there any such thing as the African mind? This is

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a question that is frequently asked by non-Africans, especially of the Western-world, even in this day and age. This question often reveals a certain condescending attitude and a dangerous "distancing" of the investigator from that part of humanity that he is studying. Such separation makes authentic human communication more difficult. Hence our hermeneutics of the African Traditional Culture aims at bridging that gap by creating a better understanding of Africans by the West and by the rest of the nations.

Africa has her unique culture. But the fact of a people having a culture ontologically presupposes that people's rationality, concepts, notions, mental abstractions, ideas, beliefs, norms and mores, no less than the further mental activities and intentionalities for standardizing the modes of behaviors expressive of those covert realms of that culture. Our approach therefore, in the main, will be a phenomenological one which is designed to let the philosophical depth of the African mind show forth.

We have called this study of African Traditional Culture a hermeneutics, a term which might easily be misunderstood. "Interpretation" frequently signifies the imposition of a framework or subjective perspective upon a subject matter. But our use of the term hermeneutics implies a radically different understanding of interpretation. While recognizing that every question always hides a point of view, a pre-judgment, which shapes the contours of what will emerge in response to the question, we maintain that phenomenological analysis can unveil concealed strata of meaning. Because hermeneutical understanding attempts to be aware of its own presuppositions, it is better equipped to be open to the revealing of human subjectivity in its cultural manifestations. It will become clear that this study addresses itself to African culture by interrogating that culture in language often derived from Western philosophical questions. But this recognized perspective does not preclude the emergence of genuine insight. All understanding always proceeds from a limited perspective; only a failure to recognize this requirement of human understanding transforms perspective into distortion. In this regard, my principal criticism of most Western anthropology will be based upon its failure to recognize the extremely limited perspective from which it operates. It is regrettable that the presumption of a neutral and non-situated point of view continues to undermine the validity of so much anthropological research.

It is a fact of living history that African culture has had destructive forces brought to bear on her. The European colonialists, imperialists, mercantile men and the often not-well informed missionaries imported their own culture and rigorously imposed them on Africans. But since a culture does not transform itself, nor can it emerge from the non-self-being of a people, a good percentage of Africans today oscillate between two cultures. Their personality has been so truncated that the perform-

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ance of authentic inner-action tends to be no longer available to them. There is an inner-self tension therefore.

Hence, in this work, we intend to let the beauty and force of the African Traditional Culture come alive again to those Africans. For, it takes tradition to convey a man's true self-world to him, and it is only by assimilating that tradition that he becomes himself authentically. In other words, if true human communication and understanding is to be established between the Africans and the rest of the world, the former must recapture their true self-being from its primal cultural source, namely, their tradition. In failure to do so, the Africans would only bring false selfhood into that communicative encounter with the rest of the nations.

Now, as we all know, a sea whose waters have been polluted must eliminate the polluting elements in order to become pure once again. So it is with the African culture. There is here the question of 'sanatio in radice,' the curing of the disease from its root. That is why in this work, we have considered cultural anthropology at length so as thereby to establish its self-contradictions, limitations, and correct, through our philosophic critique of that science, the errors and misinformations it has given to the world about the Africans. We have given also the criticism of anthropology by its adherents themselves so as to confirm the validity of our philosophic critique of it. In that way the mind of our reader will become better disposed to receive the core message of this work so that a better understanding of the Africans may occur. After all, philosophy stands to profit by the purification of the scientific attitude. Philosophy assists science to remain loyal to the truth about objects known in the world. In other words, philosophy must go beyond the merely empirical data of the sciences to the intentional, or 'spiritual realms' of meaning that underlie the overt realms, which are available to the sciences. The African overt cultural expressions with which anthropology deals must be anchored in the richness of the ground of their being, namely, their covert realms considered as their formal causes. It is the elucidation of these Africans' images of life and the culture which they express that is the essential enterprise of this work.

Since to understand and accept or recognize a people can be authentically achieved only on the basis of those terms in which they themselves understand and recognize themselves, it has been necessary that this work examine the Africans' basic concepts, notions and ideas of life, and how they initially or ontologically arrived at these. It is a question of what constitutes their cultural meanings to the Africans. For this reason, we have to consider the Africans' view of the world in order to decipher their existential notions and concepts in so far as they have been transferred into social-cultural living and human interactions. From their manner of viewing the world, the birth of the African religion came about; from it also the Africans' work of art have their origin.

Our work aims at examining and elucidating all these covert realms of the African cultural institutions. From the institution of religion, for instance, we want to show what Africans regard as a really authentic human being. From their institution of art we will elucidate the Africans' highest mode of 'transcending,' a cultural activity by which the people basically align themselves with Being, or Transcendence.

All through this work, our readers will notice how the Africans' whollistic view of all life in which nothing is seen in isolation but in its relatedness and interconnections with other entities of the 'organic' universe is a predominant idea of the Africans' culture. Another key idea that will strike our readers is the all-penetrating and pervasive African historical consciousness as it is the sustaining force of the African religious, artistic, kinship, educational and economic patterns.

In our last chapter, which examines the facticity of the African social philosophy based on familyhood, which is implicative of that Africa's cultural lifestyle of love-contests, it will become more evident to our readers to what depths the Africans' whollistic view of all life and their historical consciousness are indeed the leading ideas of that culture. That is why Africans cannot afford a neighborhood without neighbors. For the Africans, to

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be a truly civilized or cultured person is essentially to value the valuer of those material conveniences and values which science and technology afford us. That valuer is a man himself, every man. It is not natural of man to destroy that which he values and treasures. That is why the warnings and outcries of great thinkers like Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers over the atomic bombs and nuclear weaponry of America and Russia which might destroy all human life do not strike the Africans with very much concern. They sound illusory because the Africans are already convinced that the human use of technology cannot itself be subject to technological direction. By the above statements, we are indicating to our readers how personally to capture the 'unsaid' amidst the 'said' in this work. Africa is not the only nation which stands in need of being understood by the others. In fact, every nation does. The highest power with which man is endowed by his maker is that he is capable of willing to will that universal understanding of all mankind and of actually bringing it about. It is by the virtue of that understanding alone that meaningful harmony and peaceful living of nation with nations can be achieved in the practical order. Man fails to save himself in his world if he does not use his highest capabilities. From our point of view he cannot claim to be civilized or cultured if he does not efficaciously will universal understanding. Karl Jaspers expresses this statement as follows:

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> Peace can come only from bonds that link, not only intellect with intellect, but man with man. Peaceful union presupposes understanding. The possibilities of such universal understanding must grow, the more all human kinds can meet in reality. The image of man changes where it is no longer harnessed in narrow blinders and deprived of means of comparison. The unity of mankind can come to clear and steady consciousness only by the actual experience of diversity.[1]

We may now conclude this introduction with an African proverb: "Both the cock which flies up and perches on a stretched string and the string itself have no rest, they both shake on and on, until the cock leaves the string to its own being by understanding that the string is functionally meant for hanging wet clothes and dresses for drying."[2] In the same way, unless the so-called "modern, civilized and superior" adopt a true practical understanding attitude toward the so-called "primitive and savage, the inferior, the inconsequential tribes," there will be perpetual unrest in the world of mankind. That this universal unrest may be replaced by peace is the ultimate goal of our hermeneutics of the African Traditional Culture. The anthropologists have so often misinformed the world about "primitive and savage" cultures that their lies now come to be believed as truth, come to dissolve the line that separates truth from falsehood.

For the universal good, the sophistry of such pseudoscience needs the socratic criticism of a philosophical hermeneutics.

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[1] Jaspers, Karl, The Future of Mankind, translated by E.B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 73.

[2] From my personal memory.

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHIC METHOD IN RELATION TO THE SCIENCES: THE THEORIES OF HEIDEGGER AND JASPERS

Since our project is a philosophic interpretation of African culture, we must first consider and evaluate the contributions of the sciences of ethnology, psychology and especially of cultural anthropology, which are all engaged in a common task of interpreting human cultures, particularly those cultures they all term 'primitive.' African culture is one of those so termed and studied as such by these sciences. It might therefore appear that philosophy has nothing more to offer in such an enterprise or at best that it could only be equipollent with those sciences. However, a clarification of the unique nature of philosophical thinking may help to dissipate the force of this objection. Martin Heidegger distinguishes between what he terms calculative and meditative thinkings in regard of human existentiality. To the sciences he attributes the former mode of thinking.

> Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.[1]

But did Heidegger specifically attribute meditative thinking to the philosophic task? If he did, then our philosophic enterprise may go ahead beyond the scientific approaches in interpreting cultures, and especially those cultures which themselves use meditative thinking. After carefully outlining the dangers of merely technological and scientific thinking which now tend to be regarded as the only form of thinking and which therefore threaten the autochthony of the works of man, Heidegger in fact warns that man today must not abandon the intention to pit meditative thinking decisively against merely calculative thinking. In that way, even if the old rootedness is being lost in this age, a new ground and foundation will be granted again to man, a ground and foundation, he holds, out of which man's nature and all his works can flourish in a new way in our inner and real core. Heidegger poses a question and gives the answer:

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[1] Heidegger, Martin, Discourse on Thinking. A translation of Gelassenheit by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freud, with an Introduction by John M. Anderson. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 46.

> What could the ground and foundation be for the new autochthony? Perhaps the answer we are looking for lies at hand; so near that we all too easily overlook it. For the way to what is near is always the longest and thus the hardest for us humans. This way is the way to meditative thinking. Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first does not go together at all.[2]

Heidegger concludes that without this activity of engaging in meditative thinking, man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature -- that he is a meditative being. The issue then is the saving of man's essential nature by keeping meditative thinking alive.

Our assertion therefore is that since for Heidegger

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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meditative thinking is on the one hand that which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is, and on the other, that it belongs to the very nature and essence of man, it obviously follows that he is calling on philosophy for that undertaking. Therefore the hermeneutics of the African Traditional Culture cannot be viewed as a possible duplication of the already existing works of cultural anthropology. For our aim is through meditative thinking to delve beyond the merely observable outer-shells of the African culture to disclose the inner-tissue.

And to further substantiate our assertion, we should recall the fact that in his earlier work, Being and Time, Heidegger uses the phenomenological method of approach.[3] Thus Heidegger's own methodology demonstrates that for him meditative thinking is philosophy's proper mode of thinking. The meditative style of thinking differentiates philosophy from science. Moreover, in another of his later works, Existence and Being, Heidegger considers the question of "what is metaphysics?" Therein he states that no scientific discipline can hope to equal the seriousness of metaphysics.

> Philosophy can never be measured with the yard-stick of the idea of science ... in metaphysics philosophy comes to itself and sets about its explicit tasks. Philosophy is only set in motion by leaping with

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[3] Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 49-63.

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> all its being, as only it can, into the ground possibilities of being as a whole.[4]

Immediately following in his postscript to that work is Heidegger's further statement that metaphysics arises from a way of thinking which has already entered into the overcoming of metaphysics, by thinking in terms of the ground of metaphysics, that is, no longer metaphysically but philosophically. He then goes on to further characterize the differing methodology of the sciences:

> Modern science, with its completely different ways of conceiving and establishing what-is, has penetrated to that basic feature of truth according to which everything that "is" is characterized by the 'will to will,' as the prototype of which -- "the will to power" -- all appearance began. ... Modern science neither serves the purpose originally entrusted to it, nor does it seek truth in itself.[5]

Thus, the above mentioned phenomenological approach of Heidegger, as well as his distinction between the philosophic and scientific methods, gives us an access to a philosophic or hermeneutical interpretation of the African culture or any other people's culture with the principal aim of letting the inner-tissue, that 'spiritual' ground upon which are rooted those scientifically observable entities of the culture, show forth from its concealment. Philosophy's approach on culture becomes that of elucidating the ground of those truths overtly demonstrable in the sciences of culture. The metaphysical elucidation of that ground will resolve the problem of why it is that among peoples of the earth we have paradoxically cultural invariants and at the same time cultural relativism. This approach will show the inadequacy of works such as Melville J. Herskovits' Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism.[6] This work is of particular interest to us because it deals especially with African culture as contrasted with the Western. A true philosophic understanding of culture might save us such labors as Herskovits'. It should disclose to us the reality of the fact that there is no cultural standard by which we can judge one nation's view of the world as superior to another's, an unfortunate error typical of the founders of western anthropology. We will later return to an examination of the grounds of cultural variants.

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[4] Heidegger, Martin, Existence and Being, introduction and analysis by Werner Brock, first American edition (Chicago: Regnery, 1949), p. 348.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

Meanwhile, let us consider the theory of Karl Jaspers on philosophic methods as distinct from the scientific. Jaspers writes:

> Philosophy is the thinking in which we ascertain what we [culturally] live by, what really is, what makes us be; it is the thinking in which we make sure of our unconditional positions and fundamental resolves. Hence it is also our way to conceive that thinking, to test its certainty, and to illuminate its meaning and criteria. But true philosophy stays inconclusive as it systematically clarifies our basic knowledge -- the knowledge that serves, so to speak, as a frame-

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[6] Herskovits, Melville J., Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism, edited by Francis Herskovits (New York: Random House, 1972).

> work for both what we are and what, for us, there is.[7]

Of course, that by which peoples live are their stratified cultural meanings. Our philosophical treatment of the African culture will therefore examine those meanings, along with their grounds and foundations, since the people's basic concepts and notions of the world give and sustain those stratified cultural meanings. It becomes a question of philosophy's thinking with the thinking of the people which sustains them in life that illumines and guides their action both private and public. It will be a sort of homecoming of philosophy to itself, because philosophy is the activity by which man searches for the Being of beings. In Jaspers' words, "Being is revealed in man through his dealings with other men."[8] It is especially within his culture that man's dealings with his fellow men are carried out through living out of the culture's meanings. We will later take up the question of the meaning of cultural meanings and link it up with explaining why there is such a thing as cultural relativism, as we hinted above. Meanwhile, let us consider further Karl Jaspers' theory. We will confine our consideration to the thoughts of this great philosopher as set forth in the first appendix to his Way to Wisdom.

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[7] Jaspers, Karl, Philosophy, Vol. 1, translated by E. B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 21.

[8] Jaspers, Karl, Way to Wisdom, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 105.

In this work, Jaspers does not ignore the original mutuality between philosophy and science. For him a pure science requires a pure philosophy and the latter can be called pure in so far as it presupposes the sciences. In other words, there is no tenable philosophic insight outside the sciences although the former must be conscious of its distinct character from the latter. He states that the philosopher who wishes to test the truth-meaning of scientific knowledge, to auscultate it, so to speak, must participate in the actual work of these scientists. That is why, of course, our next chapter will consider the anthropological approach to the so-called "primitive African" culture. Jaspers states that philosophy, as such, refuses to transgress against the universally binding validity of the sciences. Nonetheless, he asserts that only the definitive knowledge of the sciences can make definite "non-knowledge" possible; it alone can achieve the authentic failure which opens up a vista, not merely upon discoverable existents, but upon being itself, the ground upon which for us a culture resides and operates. He states that any specific object is the object of a particular science. He asserts that the methods of philosophy, on the contrary, are methods of transcending the object. To philosophize, he says, is to transcend. To the metaphysician Jaspers gives the obligation of that profound discourse which speaks to us from the centuries of those things which once were but which must be made to come to life again. We are convinced that this penetrating remark of Jaspers applies to the cultural meanings of the African Traditional Culture. We agree with Karl Jaspers that there is no overlooking the simple fact that while scientific cognition is identical throughout the world, philosophy, despite its claim to universality, is not actually universal in any shape or form. The philosophical cloak, he says, wears multiple historical cloaks. For this reason, Jaspers defines philosophy as the act of becoming conscious of genuine being, or as the thinking of a faith in man that must be infinitely elucidated, or as the way of man's self-assertion through thinking, i.e., a people's culture. Philosophy, Jaspers says, defines and relates itself directly to godhead, the primal source in which man is given to himself.

Jaspers sums up his treatise by saying that the sciences do not encompass all of the truth but only the exact knowledge that is binding to the intellect and universally valid. But the perennial truth remains outside of the scope of science, namely, to gain insight into the essence of truth in its full scope under the present conditions of scientific knowledge and historical experience. Here Jaspers, like Heidegger, gives us the philosophic access to our hermeneutical examination of the African traditional culture:

> The philosophy 'in' the sciences, which preserves us from dissipating our energies on things that are not worth knowing and which animates scientific inquiry, is the concrete philosophy that is embodied in the totality of a specific science. This philosophy in general becomes in a sense the spokesman for knowledge in general, provided that constant care is taken to see this particular domain in relation to all the knowable and thereby to anchor it in depth.[9]

From the foregoing it follows both that philosophy and science may not ignore one another's truths, and that the concepts and ideas which guide the scientist in his investigation cannot themselves become objects of scientific investigation. There is nothing in scientific empirical experience itself to establish its own validity as an experience. In other words, science itself cannot scientifically prove that there should be such a thing as science. For, as Jaspers states, philosophy cannot be the object of scientific method. Science left to itself, that is, without conscious or unconscious philsophy, is homeless. Science in its attainment of a certainty is basically and characteristically dependent on presuppositions and methods of investigation. It is the inner core and force of that dependence which calls forth the philosophic guidance which the scientist needs if his work will not end up a groundless, unsubstantial correctness.

With the above, we have safely established that over and above scientific investigations and interpretations of cultures, philosophy has its place, a hermeneutical analysis of cultures. We can therefore without any fear of merely duplicating scientific findings about culture go ahead with our philosophic project on interpreting the African Traditional Culture.

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[9] _Ibid._, pp. 147-67.

Now, we raised the question as to what is the ground and foundation of cultural meanings and how it comes to be that in the world there are varied cultures. This is a necessary question because all cultural behaviors, gestures, expressions, are so named because they are pointers to those cultural meanings or realities from which they spring as from their formal causes. Cultural meanings are, so to speak, the ground from which those behaviors arise, germinate and are sustained. It is essential to this work, therefore, that the question of meaning be briefly examined. Why does a Westerner, an Oriental, or an African gesturize in ways that are conspicuously different? After all, by what idea or image of life do they behave differently? Can anyone culturally behave in the way he does outside of those cultural images of life? Karl Jaspers, as quoted above, tells us that Being reveals itself through man's dealings with his fellow men and we affirm that it is especially within a cultural environment that man does so. We wonder then how it is that a culture's meanings orientate the habitual mode of its people's behavior. We term these behavior patterns the culture's material cause, and they are available for scientific investigations. But we are searching for the inner active principle which conjures up

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in a people their characteristic pattern of behavior or expressity. In other words, our question ultimately is how do these people feel and experience Being through beings of their immediate environment, namely, the inorganic and organic existents of their homeland? For it is their response to that experiencing that gives birth to their modes of external gestures. These external gestures and behaviors signify ultimately the people's at-one-ment with Being. They are therefore a people's universal language.

For Saint Thomas Aquinas, the metaphysician's interest in the meaning of language differs from that of the etymologist:

> The etymology of a word differs from its meaning. For its etymology depends on what it is taken from for the purpose of signification, whereas its meaning depends on the thing to which it is applied for the purpose of signifying it. Now these differ sometimes: for lapis (a stone) takes its name from hurting the foot (laedere pedem), but this is not its meaning; otherwise iron, since it hurts the foot, would be a stone.[10]

Elsewhere Aquinas writes, as was observed by Armand Maurer, in his introduction to the little book of Aquinas, De Ente et Essentia:

> A sound is a name (nomina) only in so far as it causes knowledge of reality, for a name is, as it were, a designation of something.[11]

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[10] Aquinas, Thomas, The Summa Theologica, Vol. II, 11^{a}-11^{ae}, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, first complete American edition (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), p. 1592.

[11] Aquinas, Thomas, On Being and Essence, translated by Armand Maurer, second revised edition (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), p. 12.

Just as the elucidation of the meaning of names marks a progress in knowledge of the real world, and since the meaning of a word which is a sign of reality engages us with reality itself and there is no question of understanding it without grasping that reality, so it is with cultural expressions, habits, gestures and behaviors which designate the reality of cultural meanings. They are analogous to the 'concepts of first intention' as they relate immediately to that reality, that is, a people's meanings. They have immediate foundation in that reality. Summarily therefore, we come to understand a people's behaviors when we grasp their cultural meanings, which in turn give us a truer understanding of the people themselves as they relate to Being or Transcendence and the world. That being so, it is worthwhile to make some reflections on the meaning of meanings. We ask how a people arrives at those cultural meanings which differentiate them from other peoples. The following comment of Martin Heidegger may be helpful:

> When entities within the world are discovered along with the Being of Dasein -- that is, when they have come to be understood -- we say that they have a meaning. But that which is understood, taken strictly, is not the meaning but the entity, or alternatively, Being. Meaning is that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself. That which can be Articulated in a disclosure [as in cultural expressity] by which we understand, we call "meaning."[12]

For Heidegger, Meaning is an existentiale of Dasein, not a

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[12] Heidegger, Being and Time, op. cit., pp. 192-93. Emphasis is ours.

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property attaching to entities, lying behind them, or floating somewhere as an intermediate domain. Only Dasein has meaning and it alone can be meaningful or meaningless. In other words, Dasein's own Being and the entities disclosed with its Being can be appropriated in understanding, or can remain relegated to non-understanding.

Since for Jaspers Being is revealed in man and for Heidegger meaning occurs alone with the being of Dasein, it follows that according to Aquinas cited above, the elucidation of cultural meanings affords an understanding of the people of that culture, a grasp of who they really are as they relate with the beings of the entities of their topography and therefore with Being or transcendence. In examining a culture, philosophy aims at attaining such basic understanding of that culture's people.

But a question arises. Since it takes Being as such, the existent entities of the universe, and man himself (or better, the Man in man) to constitute meaning, how then can there be different cultures? For Being is one, as Parmenides rightly insisted, and man is one. Mountains and seas, the sun, the moon, the earth, and so forth, are of identical geological or chemical analysis. So are plants and animals when biologically, zoologically or anatomically examined. It seems then that meanings and therefore culture should be the same among the nations of the world.

A certain African saying projects this wonderment sharply. It states: "Madu bu na, kama na mba di mbadamba,"

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which in English translates as follows: "Man is one, but the nations of men are diversified." This African saying not only strikes at the root of the problem, but gives a vital hint as to where the solution should be sought. For it is not the unity of Being through beings, not the unity of the scientific analysis of the existents of the universe, which constitutes a culture. But man in his relationship with fellow men is the source of a culture.

Man actively feels and experiences Being through beings or the existents of the universe including man himself. Since it is from such man's activities that meaning occurs, and hence 'culture,' how does it come about that we empirically encounter cultures as diversified? Does this suggest that all men have not felt and experienced alike? We may now consider man in two ways. Passively viewed, man is caused by the objects of the universe to sense, that is, to see, to hear, or to smell. So it is with the other faculties of sensation. A sound, for instance, causes man to hear it. To hear the sound is to hear the object that emits it. The objects of the world are causative principles in that they cause in man their being heard, seen, touched, smelled, or tasted. In other words, they cause, so to speak, their own knowledge in man through man.

> The objects that excite the sensory powers to activity, the seen, the heard, etc., are outside ... [man's] sensation does not depend upon himself -- a

> sensible object must be there.[13]

Here, these objects are 'for themselves.' In other words, at this moment they have two simultaneous "self-stakings" whereby they stand existingly on two different thriving grounds -- the physical 'earth out there' and the human ground 'in here.' On the 'in here' ground which concerns us in this analysis, they are purely abstract objects. They are pure beings of pure Being. They merely appropriate the external senses of man to form what we call, for lack of a better term, 'sense-experience.' As Hegel stated in his treatment of "sense-certainty" in his Phenomenology of Mind, at this stage, the object is "quite indifferent to whether it is known or not; it remains and stands even though it is not known, while the knowledge does not exist if the object is not there."[14] This causal principle of the objects is also invitational in character, as it were. The objects invite man, stimulate his potency as a subject capable of knowing, of valuing and adopting meanings.

This brings us to viewing man as an active agent. Man now becomes attentive, assumes a cognitional posture, falls in with the mediating force of the 'in here' staking of the objects. He apprehends the objects and through the dynamism of his cognitional process, a spiritual activity in man, he freely forms a conceptual comprehension of the objects. But have the knowledge of objects as well as meanings and values capable of being extracted from them been the same with all men and peoples? No, they have not. Common experience informs us so. But why is it so? Three factors come to mind here.

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[13] Aristotle, The Basic Works of Aristotle: "On the Soul," Bk. 2, Ch. 5, 417b, pp. 20-25, edited by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 566.

[14] Hegel, G.W.F., The Phenomenology of Mind, translated by J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), P. 151.

Firstly, this question introduces the core of the spirituality of man in that man is essentially freedom. He wills what he wills to be such as he wills it so to be for him. He values it because he has willed it to be for him a meaning to him. With his meaning and values he forms his self-world, a seminal unit toward the constitution of culture.

Secondly, in his On the Essence of Truth, Martin Heidegger writes:

> But because truth is in essence freedom, historical man, though he lets things be, cannot really let what-is be just what it is, and as it is. What is is then covered up and distorted. Illusion comes into its own.[15]

Moreover, Karl Jaspers remarked with Nicholas of Cusa that man's intellect can prostitute itself to anything. Through perversion, therefore, meaning could easily be adopted differently when what-is is not let be as it is. An example of such a phenomenon was cited by Aquinas in answer to whether the Natural Law is the same in all men:

> ... and as to knowledge, since in some the reason is perverted by passion, or evil habit, or an evil

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[15] Heidegger, Existence and Being, op. cit., pp. 308-09.

> disposition of nature; thus formerly, theft, although it is expressly contrary to the natural laws, was not considered wrong among the Germans, as Julius Caesar relates (De Bello Gall., vi).[16]

Thirdly, the immanence of Being through beings as gift to man is of such infinite magnitude and of such endless possibilities that the wealth of possible meanings therein offered to man as himself, freedom, amidst possibilities can only be appreciably 'thought' rather than adequately approached by discursive reasoning. The reason is that two freedoms meet here. The freedom of Being which is only characterizable by its ever multiple and ever self-multiplying availability to the freely accepting man meets with man's freedom the nature of which in turn is only specifiable by that unconceptualizable wealth and depth of the infinity of the possibilities open to his choice.

Thus our considerations have touched on the spiritual nature of a culture. For what is a culture in essence and practice but a coming together of a community of 'willers' whose individual members have self-worlds. From our personal lived experience of the African culture, as we shall see in the last chapter of this work, the thus willed and formed 'whole' embodies all of the African meanings, realities, truths, values, and worths, all of which get specially articulated in the peoples' 'willing' and recognition of one another for their human worth. It is the elucidation of these spiritual realms of the African culture which is the primal aim of our philosophic project and which differentiates philosophy from science which possesses no such tool for such an enterprise.

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[16] Aquinas, The Summa Theologica, Vol. 1^a, QQ1-119, 1, 1^a-11^{ae}, QQ1-114, Q94, Art. 4, pt. 1-11, op. cit., pp. 1010-1011.

In conclusion, we would like therefore to observe that since to investigate a culture is ultimately to consider its people, the fact comes to the focus that there are two ways to consider man. On the one hand, man as an empirical existent, and object among other objects in the world, is accessible to scientific inquiry. Biology studies him as an organism, physiology as body, psychology as psyche, sociology as a social being in society, ethnology as in his racial groups, psychoanalysis as in his unconscious, Marxism as a living creature producing by his labor thereby mastering nature. In all of these man is conceived as an object of investigation. Each of these sciences provides us some knowledge about man. Each of these forms of knowledge about man is particular and, combined with all the others put together, will never give us a full apprehension of man. Man is more than is revealed in all these varied objectified aspects of himself.

On the other hand, man considered as freedom (and as we have shown above, it is in man's freedom that his culture takes its root), is no longer available as an object but as a non-object. What makes freedom possible for man is that man himself does not become an object. Karl Jaspers has written:

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> When I ask about freedom my potential self-being is both what asks and what answers. I do not ask abstractly, I ask in so far as I myself am involved. Whoever believes that mere conceptuality can truly answer the question of freedom will simply call it philosophy's basic concept. But for a man who does not "know" anything here and accordingly does not expect a result at all, for the man who wants clarity because he wants to come to himself on his historic road, freedom will turn into the specific sign of existential elucidation.[17]

In summary, therefore, let us recall to mind the following points treated in this chapter. (1) Questions regarding culture can be of two kinds, the one relating to culture in so far as science can investigate it overtly, and the other pointing to the spiritual realm of culture and postulating philosophic reflection and elucidation. (2) Man as freedom wills what is meaning for him, forms his life-world. Consequently, culture becomes a determination which occurs only through man's will when through the activity of typification man with fellow men "stakes" a community of blended life-world. That accounts for cultural diversities. (3) Each community's life-world is a constituted Understanding within which and through which the people's life meets their life. (4) Philosophy's approach to a culture becomes not only a thinking within that Understanding but at the same time an attempt to establish contextually an understanding of that functional, experiential Understanding of 'life in terms of life.' Thus our choice of the topic of this work as The Hermeneutics of the African Traditional Culture is in view of establishing the understanding of the Africans beyond all previous, merely scientific informations about Africa.

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[17] Jaspers, Philosophy, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 155. Emphasis is ours.

Since cultural anthropology has flooded the world with books on Africa, we will devote the next chapter to an examination of the methodology of that science so that its misinformations will show forth and a better understanding of the Africans begins to take root. For as Hans-Georg Gadamer points out, "the hermeneutical interest of the philosopher begins only when error has been successfully avoided."[18]

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[18] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Truth and Method (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. xxi.

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CHAPTER II

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CULTURE

Our aim in this chapter is only to give a sampling of the goals, definitions, paradigms and methodology of those anthropologists who are concerned with cultural issues. In this way we intend to establish a better grasp of what anthropology is doing and has done to unearth the contradictions, unchallenged assumptions, and shiftynesses in this science and the incorrect information and 'myths' which anthropologists have given the world about Africa. Thus we may begin to eliminate those negative notions about Africa which obstruct a better understanding and recognition of the people of Africa by the outside world. For after all, the whole purpose of this work is to so interpret the African culture that a more grounded mutual acceptance of man by his fellow man might be established. In this way the prophetic voices of philosophers like Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Teilhard de Chardin on the 'future of mankind as a family' will become in the minds of the peoples of the world a genuine optimistic possibility despite the threats of atomic destruction. It should be understood therefore that the writer of this work detests these misleading theories which anthropologists have constructed on the basis of certain paradigms and as a result of which a section of the human family, Africa, is neglected, despised, and unrecognized by the rest of the human family. 'Meaning' is the issue of this misunderstanding and we have established how it has its roots in the 'in-here' ground

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where it resides basically. Unless the 'in-here' meaning of the different parts of the human world is recognized, accepted and respected by the rest of the human world, that human family envisaged by the above mentioned philosophers becomes an illusion. We therefore hold that our approach is legitimate to our purpose, which is to attempt a hermeneutic of a culture. So we insist that 'meaning' and 'intention' as the mediating forces between Being through beings and man, are at once both the primary and secondary, efficient and formal causes of a culture. Hence, meanings and intentions must be adequately examined in our critique of cultural anthropology which follows in subsequent chapters.

With regard to the goals of anthropology, the Harvard Professor of anthropology, Douglas L. Oliver, writes in the introduction to his little book, Invitation to Anthropology:

> Anthropologists occasionally cast their glance over Western civilization, but they are mainly concerned with the "historyless" peoples, with the economics of communities without price-fixing market institutions, with government and politics in "stateless" societies, with social relations in places where kinship overweighs occupation, with the psychology of non-Westerners, with the anatomy and physiology of the whole range of mankind and its primate relatives.[1]

Thus Oliver maintains that anthropologists concern themselves with habitual behavior patterns, inherited or learned, panhuman, individual, or group-shared. But in fact they have devoted most attention to those learned habits that are shared by relatively small co-residential social aggregates of people, by bands, villages, tribes and the like. Oliver admits that it is in the study of such communities that anthropologists have developed their more or less distinctive techniques and theories for investigating and explaining habitual behaviors.

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[1] Oliver, Douglas L., Invitation To Anthropology (Garden City: Natural History Press, 1964), p. xii. Emphasis is ours.

Clyde Kluckhohn, in his often quoted anthropological study, The Mirror for Man: Anthropology and Modern Life, devoted the first chapter to treating what he terms "Queer Customs, Potsherds, and skulls." Nonetheless, he claims that present-day anthropology while it cannot pretend to be the whole study of man, comes closer to this goal than any other branch of science. He goes on to state the objectives of anthropology:

> ... the preoccupation with insignificant nonliterate peoples that is an outstanding feature of anthropological work is the key to its significance today. Anthropology grew out of the experience with primitives and the tools of trade are unusual because they were forged in this workshop. Studying primitives enables us to see ourselves better. Ordinarily we are unaware of the laws through which we look at life. It would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water. Students who had not gone beyond the horizon of their own society could not be expected to perceive custom which was the stuff of their own thinking. The scientist of human affairs needs to know as much about the eyes that see as the object seen. Anthropology holds up mirrors to man and lets him look at himself in his infinite variety. ... Picture the field worker, ... among a tribe in Amazon jungle. ... He is forced to see human life as a whole.[2]

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[2] Kluckhohn, Clyde, Mirror for Man: Anthropology and Modern Life (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1971), pp. 1-15. Emphasis is ours.

If a question is raised as to why, if anthropologists are really interested in modern life, they should keep on bothering with these *inconsequential* tribes, Kluckhohn would answer as follows: firstly, that the life ways of these tribes are part of the human record and it is the task of anthropologists to see that these things are *recorded*; secondly, that anthropologists have felt that they had no time to write books when *each year sees the extinction of aboriginal cultures that have not yet been described*. Kluckhohn recognizes, however, with Grace de Laguna, that anthropologists have come to suspect that even their own deepest beliefs and cherished convictions may be as much the expression of an unconscious provincialism as are *the fantastic superstitions of the savage*.

Victor Barnouw, professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, in his two-volume work designed as a general introduction to anthropology, confirms this impression:

> Anthropology as an academic discipline came into being *in an age of imperialism*. Racist beliefs and ideas about the uninventiveness of non-white people were part of the ideology of imperialism and colonialism. ... Widespread ideas of this sort came ready to hand when it became necessary to justify the domination of colonial populations. The "silent majority" found no difficulty in accepting such ideas, which were held by some of the best minds in Europe and America.[3]

William S. Wills, Jr. gives what he entitles "A Minimal

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[3] Barnouw, Victor, *An Introduction to Anthropology*, vol. II (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1971), p. 37. Emphasis is ours.

Definition of Anthropology." Dell Hymes commends this definition as "an effective operational definition of anthropology in terms of what anthropologists do."

> ... White rule has created a new generalization of worldwide inequality of colored peoples. One explanation for this inequality has been the postulation of innate biological inferiorities of colored peoples and this explanation has achieved uncritical acceptance that is remarkable. (Worsley, 1964, pp. 1-49; Levi Strauss, 1966; Gough, 1968). White rule with its color inequality is the context in which anthropology originated and flourished, and this context has shaped the development of anthropology.[4]

Wills asserts that the context of white rule provides a conception of anthropology that emphasizes what it actually has been, i.e., that anthropology has been the social science that studies dominated colored peoples and their ancestors living outside the boundaries of modern white societies. He notes that it was for this reason that Du Bois described the black man as the 'football of anthropology.' Finally, he quotes with dismay the remark of the British anthropologist Tylor, that it was "with a sense of attempting an investigation which wears closely on the current theology of his own day that has set him to examine systematically, among the lower races, the development of Animism."

Let us conclude this section on the objectives of anthropology by drawing from Dell Hymes himself. He quotes from The Radical Caucus at the 1969 Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association:

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[4] Wills, William S., "A Minimal Definition of Anthropology," in Reinventing Anthropology, edited by Dell Hymes (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 122-23.

> Anthropology since its inception has contained a dual but contradictory heritage. On the one hand, it derives from a humanistic tradition of concern with people. On the other hand, anthropology is a discipline developed alongside and within the growth of the colonial and imperial powers. By what they have studied (and what they have not studied) anthropologists have assisted in, or at least acquiesced to, the goals of imperialist policy. It is becoming increasingly apparent to many that these two traditions are in contradiction.[5]

Hymes expresses a wish that he hopes to see the consensual ethos of anthropology move from a liberal humanism, defending the powerless, to a socialist humanism, confronting the powerful and seeking to transform the structure of power.

To sum up this section, we want to indicate a few points which in our judgment have been the root causes of the errors of anthropologists. Because anthropologists as 'moderns' went out to study the 'primitives,' their study at best could only be comparative and therefore not an open-minded, objective enterprise. They could only see the 'primitives' through the lenses of their modernness. For example, in Tylor's view the studied are inferior races. Hence, his approach was that of the superior condescending studying inferior peoples as inferior, not as they are for who they are. If for Kluckhohn "each year sees the extinction of aboriginal culture," we would like to ask what might be the causes of that ex-

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[5] Hymes, Dell, "The Use of Anthropology," in ibid., pp. 50-53.

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tinction, whether the destructive forces are internal or external. Obviously, they were the external forces of imperialism and colonialism upon which anthropology was founded as an ancillary tool. We have seen that those forces were no respectors of the cultures of the subjugated peoples. We kill first and then dissect afterwards. So anthropologists might as well have been engaging in a form of biological laboratory studies, for they talk of 'conquered cultures' whose peoples are to them 'living fossils.' That is why we hold that no anthropologist has ever really met a so-called 'primitive.' Lastly, we have stated in the first chapter that to study a culture is the same thing as to study the people of that culture. But since man in his essential constitution is freedom and upon that freedom his culture is built, and since man as freedom defies objectivization, it follows that anthropology's objective analysis of studied peoples was not about human persons and their cultural activities as free beings. Since for the anthropologists their inquiry was concerned with humans pre-judged as savages and hence incapable of inventiveness and economic enterprise, the conclusions of anthropology were in fact achieved before the process of investigation. The other point, that these 'primitives' are historyless according to preconceived ideas of anthropologists, shall be treated in detail in the next chapter where we intend to give a detailed critique of anthropology.

Having sampled the expressions of the key goals of

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anthropology from the writings of the anthropologists themselves, we now turn to a similar survey of their basic concepts, assumptions, principles and definitions of culture. It is in this section that we notice the virtues of anthropology as a self-acknowledged empirical science and at the same time its self-contradiction in the manner in which its adherents apply those definitions to certain sections of the human family. As we shall presently see, anthropologists make a good distinction between the overt and the covert realms of culture. Their work deals principally with the former, but the latter is merely referred to by inference. We maintain, however, that what they merely infer gives us the core and essence of culture and that it is the business of philosophy to elucidate this essential core ontologically.

According to Victor Barnouw, Tylor was the first author to use the English word "culture" as it is known today, in his most influential book, Primitive Culture. On the very first page of that work, Tylor gave the definition of culture which is supposed to be universal in itself but which makes him self-contradictory when he applied it to the Africans, whom he called a lower race. For Tylor culture is:

> ... that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.[6]

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[6] Barnouw, op. cit., p. 30. Cf. Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1877), vol. 1, p. 1.

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Barnouw goes on to point out that Tylor understands the uniformity of culture in different parts of the world as ascribable to the uniform action of uniform causes, while on the other hand its various grades may be regarded as stages of development or evolution, each the outcome of previous history, and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future. For Tylor, man's cultural institutions are as stratified as the layers of the earth, progressive through similar stages in different parts of the world. He attributes cultural similarities to what he calls, "the like working of men's minds under like conditions." Our question, then, is that if culture is such as Tylor has characterized it, on what basis could he dare to categorize certain cultures and their peoples as inferior to his own culture and people?

William X. Taylor, in his Basic Facts of Anthropology, defines culture abstractly viewed as the totality of the patterns of living practiced by man at all places and all times. He holds that discussions of different cultures are concerned with variations and contrasts between different ways of living, and distinguishes three kinds of phenomena that make up a culture.

> (1) "Behavior" consists of any explicit and socially standardized actions of the human body--including gestures, facial expressions, and modes of movement, dress, speech, marching, dancing, worship or work. (2) "Artifacts" are explicit, observable objects, or articles that are socially standardized and used by the people of a culture. Such tangible items--including clothing, shelter, tools, machines, musical instruments, and magical charms--are referred to

> collectively as material culture. (3) "Ideas" are the socially standardized thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and emotions that are implicit in the observable behavior and artifacts of a group of people.[7]

Taylor goes on to state that every particular local or regional culture is unique both in content and configuration. For him culture is continuous and stable; some of its elements have great capacity to survive. Our point here is that if every culture is unique in context and configuration, each culture should be studied on its unique merits, not with the usual anthropological paradigm of modern versus primitive. Again we suggest that those elements of culture which for anthropologists are implicit in the observable ones actually form the inner-tissue of the culture and that it is they that should be the focus of a hermeneutic of culture. However, we endorse Taylor's definition of a culture area as a portion of the earth's surface in which particular artifacts of culture traits tend to cluster, i.e., a series of communities that despite variations in culture share a significantly large number of culture traits (e.g., the Indians of the Southwest).

We may now turn once again to Clyde Kluckhohn's Mirror for Man, whose second chapter continues to discuss "Queer Customs." He gives a series of anthropology's concepts of culture. We can only cite some of them.

> ... By "culture" anthropology means the total life way of a people, the social legacy the individual

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[7] Taylor, William X., Basic Facts of Anthropology, first edition (New York: Crowell Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 18-55. Emphasis is ours.

acquires from his group.

Or culture can be regarded as that part of the human environment that is the creation of man.

... A humble cooking pot is as much a cultural product as is a Beethoven sonata.

... To the anthropologist, however, to be human is to be cultured. There is culture in general, and then there are the specific cultures such as Russian, American, British, Hottentot, Inca.

... The past experience of other men in the form of culture enters into almost every event. Each specific culture constitutes a kind of blueprint for all of life's activites. ... There is thus no "either-or" between nature and that special form of nurture called nature. Culture determinism is as onesided as biological determinism. Culture arises out of human nature, and its forms are restricted both by man's biology and by natural laws. It is equally true that culture channels biological processes -- vomiting, weeping, fainting, sneezing, the daily habits of food intake and waste elimination.

... Culture is not a disembodied force. It is created and transmitted by people. However, culture, like well-known concepts of the physical sciences, is a convenient abstraction. One never sees gravity ...

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... Yet certain happenings that can be seen may be given a neat abstract formulation by assuming that the electromagnetic field exists. Similarly one never sees culture as such. What is seen are regularities in the behavior of artifacts of a group that has adhered to a common tradition. ... Culture is a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the group's knowledge stored up (in memories of men, books and objects) for future use.

... "Culture," then, is a "theory." Since culture is an abstraction, it is important not to confuse culture with society.

A "society" refers to a group of people who interact more with each other than they do with other individuals -- who cooperate with others for the attainment of certain ends. You can see and indeed count the individuals who make up a society.

A "culture" refers to the distinctive ways of life of such a group of people. Not all social events are culturally patterned. New types of circumstances arise for which no cultural solutions

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> have as yet been devised.
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> A culture constitutes a storehouse of pooled learning of the group.
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> The members of all human societies face some of the same unavoidable dilemmas, posed by biology and other facts of human situation. This is why the basic categories of all cultures are similar. Human culture without language is unthinkable. No culture fails to provide for aesthetic expression and aesthetic delight.
>
> Every culture supplies standardized orientations toward the deeper problem, such as death. Every culture is designed to perpetuate the group and its solidarity, to meet the demands of individuals for an orderly way of life and for satisfaction of biological needs.[8]

For Kluckhohn, the needs and drives of biological man, and the physical environment to which he must adjust, provide the stuff of human life, but a given culture determines the way this stuff is handled, by what he calls the tailoring. He states that culture is a compulsive force to most of us most of the time, and quotes the dictum of Alfred North Whitehead that "human life is driven forward by its dim apprehension of notions too general for its existing language."

We have offered this extensive treatment of Kluckhohn because he is the one anthropologist most vocal in specifically claiming that his anthropology has solved the puzzlement of philosophers in face of both the cultural "strange behavior of madmen and heathens," and the "experiences of discomfort which one feels who fails to conform to the cultural standards of his childhood training." This superiority of anthropology over philosophy Kluckhohn asserts was possible because of the former's development of the theories of 'unconscious' and of culture. For us, this is a primal issue which we will take up in the next chapter in our critique of anthropology.

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[8] Kluckhohn, op. cit., pp. 17-44.

To conclude this section, however, let us draw some samples from the work of combined authorship of A. L. Kroebar and Clyde Kluckhohn. It is entitled: Culture: A Crticial Review of Concepts and Definitions and is located in the papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology (Harvard University). Of special interest to us, given our aim of unearthing the limitations of the science of anthropology, is that part of this work which deals more or less specifically with the definitions of culture by anthropologists, focusing on their distinction between the overt and covert dimensions of culture. For we contend that culture overtly considered is a fertile ground for any of the empirical human sciences of sociology, psychology and anthropology. But covertly considered, culture would no longer be available to scientific empirical observation and experimentation. At best, these covert dimensions of culture would be naked assumptions or presuppositions of these sciences. If, however, a science ably examines and elucidates the causal nature of the covert, then that science would cease to be mere science but a philosophizing activity. Let us then turn to Kroebar and Kluckhohn.

Culture includes not only the outward, visible acts of individuals, but also behavior that is not readily observable -- the feeling, thinking, believing. The first category is always referred to as *overt* behavior, and the second as *covert* behavior.

... Overt culture refers to patterned behavior that is directly observable or to the material products which result from behavior. An axe, an arrow point, a basket, or any other artifact is a clear example of overt culture. These things are tangible and visible, and have discernible physical properties. This is equally true of action. A man swinging an axe, or discharging an arrow from his bow, a woman weaving a basket or using it to collect seeds are performing actions which are observed directly.

Covert culture refers to patterned behavior that is not directly observable. Ideas, attitudes, feelings, emotional states, and beliefs are categorical examples of covert culture. These cannot be observed directly, rather we *infer* from observable behavior that they exist. ... We assume that overt action is an expression of covert behavior.

The essential part of culture is to be found in the patterns embodied in the social traditions of the group, that is, in knowledge, ideas, beliefs, values, standards, and sentiments prevalent in the group. The overt part of culture is to be found in the actual behavior of the group, usually in its usages, customs, and institutions.

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values. Culture consists of the increments which have accrued to individual minds after birth. When the increments of enough minds are sufficiently *alike*, we speak of a culture.

Culture traits are manifested by cultural agents through the medium of vehicles. ... These vehicles are human beings, the vehicles are "objectifications of culture" -- observable behavior and its results.

... Culture consisting of mental constructs, is not directly observable; it can be studied solely through the objectifications in behavior and results of behavior.

On the one hand, [culture is] the whole of man's material civilization, and even systems of industry; and, on the other hand, all of non-material or spiritual civilization, such as language, literature, art,

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> religion, ritual, morality, law, and government.
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> ... Thus we can say that the manufactures and behavior of the aggregate of human beings which can be directly observed are the 'percepts' of culture, while ideas of the aggregate of human beings which have been communicated are the 'concepts' of culture.
>
> ... Both behavior and artifacts are expressions of the primary meanings, values, and norms in their variably integrated groupings. Values in short, are primary. ... Nevertheless, both behavior and artifacts have room made for them as "objectifications" -- that is, expressions or derivations.[9]

The above samplings are enough for our purposes. There is a seeming endlessness to anthropologists' definitions of culture. Their pretentious all-inclusivity will be curbed in our critique of anthropology when we show that the wealth, dignity, and respectability of a culture, and hence of the people of that culture, accrue to the covert formal causes or spiritual realms of that culture, a dimension which anthropology does not examine but merely infers or presupposes. It is only in these spriritual realms of a culture that we encounter its depth and reach its people as they truly are.

To conclude this chapter, we will do well to examine briefly the actual methodology of anthropologists in their investigation, what they call "field work." Let us first cite the notions of Kluckhohn on this issue from his same popular work, The Mirror for Man:

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[9] Kroeber, A.L. and Kluckhohn, Clyde, Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1963), pp. 60-357. Emphasis is ours.

> Since there are no published accounts of the tribe, or only spotty or inadequate ones, he [the field worker] depends more on his eyes and his ears than upon books. Compared with the average sociologist, he is almost illiterate.
>
> ... his seeing and listening take on a special character. The ways of life he observes are so unfamiliar that it is next to impossible to interpret them through his own values. He cannot analyze in terms of the things he had decided in advance were important, because everything is out of pattern. It is easier for him to view the scene with _detachment and relative objectivity_ just because it is remote and _unfamiliar, because he himself is not emotionally involved_.[10]

Kluckhohn goes on to justify why anthropological studies must adopt the principle of "_from the primitive to the civilized_." He maintains that anthropologists should first study exotic primitive cultures and afterwards study their own civilized ones. For Kluckhohn, 'society' could not afford, in the period in which he lived, to support many specialists in highly esoteric studies unless they showed promise of practical usefulness. He claims that fortunately, "the detailed study of primitive peoples falls into _the useful category_." He further remarks:

> I may decide that what is really needed is knowledge of urban communities like Cambridge, Massachusetts. But in the present situation of social science, a host of practical difficulties confront me. [Firstly] to do a comprehensive job, I should need _more collaborators than could be paid for under existing arrangements for the support of research on human behavior_.
>
> Then I should have to ask: in terms of actual human interactions, where does Cambridge leave off and where do Boston, Watertown, and Somerville begin. Many people living in Cambridge grew up in different parts of the United States and in foreign countries.

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[10] Kluckhohn, _op. cit._, pp. 11-12. Emphasis is ours.

> I should always be in danger of attributing to conditions in Cambridge ways of behavior which in fact should be explained as results of upbringing in far distant places. Secondly, I should be dealing with dozens of different biological stocks and mixtures between them.
>
> The primitive society is the closest _laboratory conditions_ the students of man ever hope to get. Such groups are _usually small_ and can be studied intensively by few people at slight expence.[11]

Kluckhohn goes on to qualify these small groups as ordinarily isolated so that one does not have the problem as to where one social system begins and another ends. For him the members of the group have lived their lives within a small area and have been exposed continually to the pressure of the same natural forces. They have had almost identical education so that ways of life are comparatively stable. These non-literate societies represent the end results of many different experiments carried out by nature. He states further that in the primitive society the correspondence between the habits of individuals and customs of the community is ordinarily greater because the primitive tends to find happiness in the fulfillment of intricately _involuted_ cultural patterns, whereas the _modern_ more often tends to feel the pattern as repressive to his individuality.

We do not intend to take up here the full critique of anthropology, which will be reserved for the next chapter. But to whet and sustain our reader's interest, let us ask Kluckhohn a few questions: If there were no primi-

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[11] _Ibid_., pp. 13-30. Emphasis is ours.

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tive cultures would there have been any such thing as the science of anthropology? If all primitive cultures are completed and recorded, can anthropology still exist? The complex situation of Cambridge has not changed since Kluckhohn's analysis. Can Cambridge and such other modern or civilized societies ever become a field for anthropology which claims to study the whole man? What would Kluckhohn do with such tribes as the Igbos, the Yorubas, the Hausas, the Efiks, the Ashantis, etc. of West Africa, each of which is by no means a small or isolated group but rather is composed of four, six to nine and more million peoples, each occupying such vast areas of land that Cambridge superimposed on it would form but a little village? Would perhaps a little further insight into the distinction between culture and 'mathematicized' society not have dismissed this anthropological model as an inauthentic scientific paradigm? If for Kluckhohn "to be human is to be cultured," are they not 'humans' who inhabit Cambridge? If the "modern tends to feel the pattern as repressive," might it not be so because the pattern does not reach his existential inner self-world, insofar as it did not arise from there primordially as its seminal foundation? If Kluckhohn has first to study these people he terms inconsequential, and only then come back to project his results upon his 'civilized consequentials,' we wonder if he is not indulging in a self-contradictory enterprise. Might he not be engaging in a reversal process of the inferior showing light on the superior? But how could a non-self-involving student (a stance recommended by Kluckhohn) catch the root and essence of what he studies? It seems rather that he would at best project falsehoods upon the real!

Dell Hymes seems to mitigate the view of Kluckhohn and so it might be interesting to take samples from his own notions on the field work methodology of anthropologists.

> On the one hand, to take the study of a distinctive cultural tradition (i.e., distinctive others) seriously entails, as Boasians insisted, a considerable commitment, including the kind of language one expects of a classical or oriental scholar. There is a perennial place for the thorough scholarly commitment to any culture tradition, but not for the hit and run tactics of many field workers. On the other hand, justifications for this image of anthropological research, other than long term humanistic commitment, hardly hold water.
>
> ... In short, it is not a sufficient reason to study another culture simply because it is "other." Ethically and politically, too, there must be good reasons to inflict yet one more American inquirer on another part of the world.[12]

Hymes concludes by stating that instead of taking for granted that a doctoral candidate in anthropology "will do [exotic] field work, let us require candidates to demonstrate that they should be 'allowed to.'"

This brings us finally to the major theories in anthropology's approach to field work. The basic concept around which these schools of thought revolve is that of culture-change. The oldest among them is that of Cultural

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[12] Hymes, op. cit., pp. 31-37.

Evolutionism.

> Nurtured by the theory of Darwinian biological evolution, this concept of history dominated anthropological thinking during the second half of the nineteenth century.
> In its view, mankind was seen as moving inevitably through a series of "stages" from Savagery to Civilization.
> "Civilization" was exemplified in the institutions of upper middle class West European societies, and "Savagery" by a hypothetical way of living not unlike that of contemporary Australian aborigines, the South African Bushmen, and such peoples, who were considered to be "living fossils."[13]

Victor Barnouw notes that Julian H. Steward, a prominent student and reviver of cultural evolution, makes a distinction between three schools of evolutionary thought. First, unilinear evolution, the classical nineteenth century formulation, dealt with particular cultures placing them in stages of universal sequence. Second, universal evolution, a rather arbitrary label to designate the modern revamping of unilinear evolution, is concerned with culture rather than with cultures. Third, multilinear evolution is like unilinear evolution in dealing with developmental sequences, but is distinctive in searching for parallels of limited occurrence instead of universals.[14]

A second anthropological school is described by Oliver as Cultural Diffusionism.

> Implicit in these theories [of Diffusionism] was the assumption that humans are by and large uninventive, that most technological, esthetic, philosophical, social, and other innovations have been

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[13] Oliver, op. cit., pp. 62-63. Emphasis is ours.

[14] Barnouw, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

> made only once -- their widespread occurrence being accounted for by diffusion. The most extreme statement of this view was advanced by some British anthropological scholars who argued that civilization was born only once in Egypt, from which center the rest of the savage or barbaric world was enlightened by emissaries in search of treasures like gold and pearls.[15]

A number of German speaking scholars have, since about 1910, been in process of weaving a complicated fabric of theory of social anthropology which combines some premises of evolutionism with others of diffusionism. According to this school (the Kulturkreis School), different culture complexes or types of culture, each characterized by a number of essential and minor features, developed in one or another part of the world of successive epochs, and each complex or type subsequently diffused over indicated portions of the world. The Kulturkreis writers have therefore tried to show that an analysis of any one community will reveal the complexes of culture types which diffused to it in ancient times, and which are now present in it, layer upon layer. "Examples of such combinations are root-crop horticulture, matrilineal descent, animism, etc., or pastoral nomadism, patrilineal descent, polytheism and so forth."[16]

A final school is frequently described as Functionalism.

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[15] Oliver, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

[16] Ibid., p. 65.

> ... functionalists appear to wish to restrict cultural anthropology to a painstaking study of the dynamic, functional interconnections between the many features of living cultures. Radcliffe Brown, a leading theoretician of functionalism has suggested that a culture resembles a complex biological organism, and that the proper sphere of the cultural anthropologist is the study not of the growth of evolution of social organism (i.e., historical processes in the development of culture), but only of their present structure and physiology.[17]

Functionalism has been a kind of social anatomy and physiology without genetics. In castigating evolutionist and diffusionist attempts to obtain historical and genetic solutions, functionalists often pointed correctly to over-hasty historical formulations.

We may now round off this section of our journey with anthropology with some citations from Claude Levi-Strauss' prescriptions of what should be the methodological aims of anthropology with a view to establishing their discipline as a science among other social or human sciences. He outlines three such aims which for him are as good as any universal laws of any science.

First, Objectivity:

> The first aim of anthropology is to be objective, to inculcate objective habits and to reach objective methods. Not simply an objectivity enabling the observer to place himself above his own personal beliefs, preferences, and prejudices; that kind of objectivity characterizes every social science or they could not be regarded as science at all. The objectivity aimed at by anthropology is on a higher level: The observer must not only place

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[17] Jacobs, Melville and Stern, Barnard J., General Anthropology (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1968), pp. 124-26.

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> himself above the values accepted by his own society or group, but must adopt certain definite methods of thought; he must reason on the basis of concepts which are valid not merely for an honest and objective observer, but for all possible observers.

Thus for Levi-Strauss the anthropologist does not simply set aside his own feelings; he creates new mental categories and hopes to introduce notions of space and time, opposition and contradiction, which are as foreign to traditional thought as the concepts met with today in certain branches of the natural sciences. For him anthropology aims to be a 'semeological' science, and takes as a guiding principle that of "meaning."

Second, Totality:

> [Anthropology] regards social life as a system of which all the aspects are organically connected. When the anthropologist endeavors to create models, it is always with the underlying motive of discovering a form that is common to various manifestations of life. This tendency underlies both the notion of the total social phenomenon, and that of pattern.

Third, Meaningfulness:

> These societies [that is, the primitive ones] are, to a far greater degree than the other, based on personal relationships, on concrete relations between individuals. In this respect it is, rather, modern societies that should be defined in negative terms. We are no longer linked to our past by an oral tradition which implies direct contact with others (story tellers, priests, wise men, or elders), but by books amassed in libraries, books from which we endeavor -- with extreme difficulty -- to form a picture of their authors.[18]

For Levi-Strauss, quoting from Weiner's Cybernetics, it is no wonder that the larger communities contain far less available information than the smaller communities, to say nothing of the human elements of which all communities are built up. He goes on to conclude that in the future, it may be recognized that anthropology's most important contribution to social science is to have introduced, if unknowingly, this fundamental distinction between two types of social existence: a way of life recognized at the outset as traditional and archaic and characteristic of "authentic" societies and more modern forms of existence, from which the first named type is not absent but wherein groups that are imperfectly "authentic" are organized within a much larger specifically "unauthentic" system.

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[18] Levi-Strauss, Claude, Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1963), pp. 363-367. Emphasis is ours.

In conclusion, we admire Levi-Strauss' distinction between authentic and inauthentic cultures, a distinction Kluckhohn might have adopted to distinguish between his inconsequential tribes and his modern Cambridge urban dwellers. However, we are amazed at Levi-Strauss' advocacy for meaning because, as noted by Stanley Diamond in his article, "Anthropology in Question," in Reinventing Anthropology, Levi-Strauss in confrontation with Paul Ricoeur and others (at the symposium organized by L'Espirit in 1963), repeatedly denied that the question of meaning has any interest for him. Ricoeur asked: "But if I do not understand myself better by understanding primitive peoples, can I still talk of meaning? If meaning is not a sector of self-understanding, I do not know what is is." Levi-Strauss replied: "In my perspective, meaning is never the primary phenomenon." For us this denial by Levi-Strauss of the essential role of meaning in the study and interpretation of a culture goes to qualify what he really means by 'objectivity,' that is to say, a mode of inquiry in which one section of the human globe studies the others as mere objects, mere things, not one that would aim at understanding the studied on their own human self-understanding terms. It is the error of anthropology to claim to understand other cultures while doing so outside those cultures' meanings, their core realities and spiritual values.

We shall discuss some of these errors as they bear upon the anthropological study of Africa in the next two chapters.

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CHAPTER III

THE CRITIQUE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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Having outlined in the previous chapter the approach of anthropology to culture, our purpose in this chapter is to offer both philosophic and scientific criticism of cultural anthropology in order that once their paradigmatic and conclusive errors have been fully corrected, our hermeneutic of the African Traditional Culture may shine brightly for its worth. For there is no escape from the truth of the saying of Hans-Georg Gadamer quoted earlier, that the hermeneutical interest of a philosopher begins only after errors have been cleared up. One important fact has to be acknowledged, however, namely, that the science of anthropology has helped our philosophic enterprise in that through its errors our insight into the hermeneutic of the African culture has become heightened.

Now when any science has moved from the elementary descriptive analytical stage to the explanatory, we say of that science that it has made a vital progress in the universal scheme of the knowledge of the reality which it treats. It is now a mature science. Moreover, we maintain that, when a science has progressed beyond these two levels to that of self-criticism, that science then emerges at its highest peak of authenticity, honesty, and true universality. For then and only then do arbitrariness, subtle prejudgments, blindness to other possibilities, forced and false, hasty conclusions and plausible opinions get corrected and thus yield that rigorous realm of the free spirit

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in whose open field alone may a science for all be pursued. For Jaspers, it is only then that " ... all the more brightly shines the genuine unswerving, never failing scientific attitude whose very critical awareness of its limits leaves room for every other source of truth in man."[1] Such a science would indeed thereby follow in the footsteps of that true philosophy which all through the ages has made vital progress only through self-criticism. Aristotle has given rigorous criticisms of both Plato and the Pre-Socratics. Francis Bacon, Descartes and Kant, as we know, did the same for the philosophies previous to their own. Philosophy could only be that progressive because of its intrinsic demand for a personal involvement and a responsible self-critique on the part of its true adherents, qualities which anthropologists do not advocate with regard to their own science.

Plato said of the sciences that they are abstract, and that this is the case because they are not able to defend and anchor their principles and presuppositions. That of course is understandable. But when a science loses sight of its dependence on its presuppositions and goes so far as to claim certain knowledge of the very foundations on which unquestioned presuppositions rest, then such a science needs a check. Thus, anthropology claims to know man, the "whole of man." At the same time it states of the covert dimensions of man that it infers them, in other words, it presupposes them, but does not know nor examine them scientifically. We cannot weary of emphasizing that the very essence of the culture of man lies in those covert realms, e.g., man as "eros or Love," which in the metaphysical work of Plato, the Symposium, was depicted by Socrates as a daimon or a spirit. This daimon was further portrayed by Socrates as "the fecundating principle which in knowledge, desire, attainment, and continued possession brings man as near to the gods as may be."[2]

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[1] Jaspers, Karl, Way to Wisdom, op. cit., p. 157.

Therefore, since love is the dynamic underlying principle of the African way of daily living, as we shall see, we must refuse the claim of anthropology to know the "whole" African cultural life without proceeding from the context of the people's way of loving. We should note, further, that love so specifically embodies knowledge, understanding and moderate desire that genuine communication of person to person carries with it that flavor and fragrance, so to speak, of Being by which each person in an authentic culture finds his existence enriching and meaningful. In other words, through loving, the African captures his existence at its primal source; his thread of affinity with Being has never been disassociated from his consciousness of self. His act of existence carries with it at each stage his beginning and his end unto the same beginning.

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[2] Plato, Symposium, Intr. by F. H. Anderson; translated by Benjamin Jowett (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc.), p. 8.

In this sense, anthropologists have rightly stated that man is culturally the product of his society. But it is a truth only half way appreciated as long as they have not elucidated this "spiritual" realm of that society, namely the sphere of the people's life as a love-contest. That is precisely why the explanation of Plato in this matter is pertinent:

> The human soul is essentially in motion. It is life and integration of living functions. ... Man throughout his whole nature is erotically motivated. His "love" or desire is manifest in three mutually interacting functions, appetite, "spirit," and reason. Did man consist of reason only, he would be a god. Were he a creature of mere appetite [as it seems in Marxist theory of economics; anthropologists' emphasis on technology], he should be classified as a brute animal. By virtue of his composite nature he has a status somewhere between that of beasts and that of the gods. By his desiring and his effort he may gravitate to a relatively lower condition or ascend to a higher one.[3]

This basic conception of man by Plato is of the type that we maintain is entirely beyond the scope of the science of anthropology. For in it we have a fundamental causal principle of culture as "man's own-made," a theme with a far deeper significance than anthropology's definition of culture as a creation of man.

If, therefore, anthropologists had not merely scratched at the husks of culture but had gone deeper into its inner-tissue, namely, its historical and conserving cause, that is, "man as love," they would have viewed these so-called

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[3] Ibid., p. 9. Emphasis is ours.

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primitive cultures and consequently their peoples with due reverence. They would not have been mere tools for the imperialists in their destructive control of those cultures. They should have been the first group of foreigners in those exotic lands to empathize with the peoples' vascillating between the will to continue to defend their cultural values and the capital price they would have to pay in such an attempt under the 'Hegelian gun powder.' According to Hegel, the invention of gunpowder was "a manifestation of the divine. Mankind needed it, and lo, it was there."[4] Africa is at odds with that manifestation of the divine.

In fine, either anthropologists themselves had their own native culture or they did not. If they had one, again, either they treasured it and valued their personhood by it or they did not. If they did, they should have derived from their treasuring and valuing selves a model of the correct practical mental attitude with which to regard other cultures and their peoples. Their participation in the imperialist policy is a scandal. If they did not, the Cartesian common "good sense"[5] should have indicated to them well enough that there could be other value systems apart from their own. On the other hand, if they had not any culture of their own, that was all the more reason why they should have been rather filled with awe and thrilled when fortunately at last they came in contact with cultures. They should have been inspired to emulation rather than to superior criticism. From these considerations it may be seen that the anthropological paradigm of "modern-primitive" is scientifically invalid. For by modern in essence, anthropologists understand Western culture and those parts of the world like Russia where there are highly developed technological and scientific industries. Industries for purely economic productions have become for anthropologists in their purely calculative thinking the one sole determinant factor of culture and civilization. But economic structures are but one tiny part of the complex of stratified cultural institutions, meanings and values. Anthropologists seem here to equate a part for the whole. The means replaces the end. Calculative thinking of technology has come to be taken for the only thinking proper to man. In contrast, Heidegger claims that meditative thinking is the one proper to the essence of man and, we might say, to his cultural living. According to Plato, economics supplies for and satiates the appetitive or the lowest level of man's nature, as we have seen above. To contrast 'modern culture' with the primitive (in which latter the emphasis is on the value of man which is served by economic devices), and to rate the former as superior to the latter,

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[4] Gombrich, E. H., In Search of Cultural History (Bristol: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969).

[5] Descartes, René, Philosophical Essays, Discourse on Method, Part 1 (Some thoughts on the sciences), translated with intr. by L. J. Lafleur (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc.), p. 3.

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indicates a lack of balance and a failure in the understanding of culture by anthropology. In other words, anthropologists are in error. While they claim to study the 'primitive' cultures with the intent of thereby being "jolted" to come back to the study of their own modern cultures with a fresh perspective, in fact the reverse has been the case. The latter have been the yard-stick by which the former have been measured in anthropological research. Their sophistry lies in this, that although they are well traveled, anthropologists remain like Descartes' "untraveled in supposing that everything contrary to [their] own customs is ridiculous and irrational."[6] Their error is to have confused industrial superiority with ideological superiority or that meaning which is the very stuff of cultural living. We will later treat culture as a people's historicity and show that African culture, historically understood, has its own internal unique modernness. In this regard, a question remains to be asked: how would a conscientious student of anthropology and native of a so-called 'primitive' place view his own culture? Certainly not as primitive.

But, after all, basically the sciences are characteristically concrete and universally pragmatic. Any science which does not fulfill this qualification needs questioning and radical criticism. With questions, such as,

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[6] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

"Cui bono? Who is the public for one's research? Who receives it and utilizes it, intended public or not?" Dell Hymes raises the issue of anthropology's lack of universality in its usefulness. For Hymes, "anthropology will remain mainly a defensive source of knowledge about the exploited of the world for those who exploited them,"[7] unless a 'radical change' is adopted and the knowledge obtained becomes helpful to those from whom it comes. In this way Dell Hymes, a one-time Professor of Anthropology but now of "Folklore and Linguistics" at the University of Pennsylvania and a member of the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association, introduces us to the esoteric critical examination of anthropology by anthropologists themselves. In 1974, Hymes along with fifteen other contemporary American anthropologists, produced a work, Reinventing Anthropology, which will soon become more familiar to our reader. In our judgment, this study is a most valuable work in anthropology. According to Hymes, 'Reinventing" literally means a reinventing of that science as though it never had existed. It has struck these essayists that anthropology has traditionally lacked universality both with regard to its subject matter and with regard to its pragmatism. The authors as scientists show that both the assumptions and institutional setting of anthropology have been irreversibly undermined and they raise many challenging questions about the fundamental concepts and practices in its field. To be sure, we believe that since the source of anthropology was colonial imperialism, now that that phase of human experience is fast giving way to nationalistic resuscitations of the 'conquered or suppressed' cultures, as anthropologists are wont to say, it is only natural that anthropologists should critically examine the grounds of the objectives, concepts, and methodological approach of their science to determine if perhaps it may be reckoned as a "science" among the human sciences. Moreover, these contemporary anthropologists all seem to have been influenced by Michael Polanyi's The Study of Man and Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.[8] These authors convey the passion and sense of responsibility and personal involvement which they feel essential to the validity of all knowledge and especially to scientific knowledge. They attempt to offer a new paradigmatic focus for the social sciences, since they are convinced that the so-called disinterested objective approach has led to profound misunderstandings of cultural phenomena. Hence, they resolutely reject the attitude of Kluckhohn and Levi-Strauss who call for no emotional involvement; complete detachment; 'the anthropologist must set aside his own feelings.' On the contrary, hermeneutics postulates that one should not so much throw off one's own self-world but rather bring it home again in one's encounter with and understanding of another cultural-world.

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[7] Hymes, Dell, "The Use of Anthropology" in Reinventing Anthropology, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

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[8] Polanyi, Michael, The Study of Man (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972); Kuhn, Thomas S., The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Vol. II, Number 2. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

It is worthwhile, therefore, to consider briefly the self-criticisms that these modern anthropologists have recently produced about their discipline. Before taking up our main source, Reinventing Anthropology, let us cite an analysis of the objectives of anthropology from Ruth Benedict's Patterns of Culture.

> The study of custom can be profitable only after certain preliminary propositions have been violently opposed. In the first place any scientific study requires that there be no preferential weighting of one or another of the items in the series it selects for its consideration. ... It is only in the study of man himself that the major social sciences have substituted the study of one local variation, that of Western Civilization.
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> Anthropology was by definition impossible as long as these distinctions between ourselves and the primitive, ourselves and the barbarians, ourselves and the pagan, held sway over people's minds. It was necessary first to arrive at that degree of sophistication where we no longer set our own belief over against our neighbor's superstition. It was necessary to recognize that these institutions which are based on the same premises, let us say the supernatural, must be considered together, our own among the rest.[9]

We can now turn to our handbook, Reinventing Anthropology, where Dell Hymes, quoting Levi-Strauss, states that anthropology is the outcome of an historical process which has made the larger part of mankind subservient to the other, and during which millions of innocent human beings have had

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[9] Benedict, Ruth, Patterns of Culture, Preface by Margaret Mead (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, Sentry Edition, 1959), pp. 3-4. Emphasis is ours.

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their resources plundered and their institutions and beliefs destroyed, whilst they themselves were ruthlessly killed, thrown into bondage, and contaminated by diseases they were unable to resist. Anthropology is a product of this era of violence. Its incapacity to assess more objectively the facts pertaining to the human condition reflects, on the epistomological level, a state of affairs in which one part of mankind treated the other as an object.[10] In the same work, Gerald Berreman concludes that this situation has made it impossible for anthropology to give genuine illumination to human experience:

> Anthropology that is remote from human experience often becomes inhumane in its consequences as well as artificial and uninteresting in content. ... Much of our work bears little relationship to the existential reality of human lives, producing what I called, in an earlier essay on the topic, "lifeless descriptions of human life." Anthropology which does not reflect and convey or illuminate the human experience is no anthropology at all. Many have come to believe, as I do, that too much contemporary anthropology is this nonanthropology.
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> If we [anthropologists] involve ourselves in portentous activities fateful to the lives of others, we can claim no immunity from responsibility for their consequences. This, we radicals and dissidents want to convey to our colleagues...
>
> Insofar as we cling to exclusively conventional studies of remote, the exotic, and the powerless, we are contributing to the problems of people of this world and we deserve no more sympathy than we get from them.[11]

John F. Szwed observes that prefabricated Negroes are sketched on sheets of paper and superimposed upon the Negro community, then when someone thrusts his head through the page and yells, "Watch out there, Jack, there's people living under here," anthropologists are shocked and indignant.[12] Stanley Diamond adds that this approach degrades both the individuals being studied and the investigator himself.

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[10] Hymes, Dell, "The Use of Anthropology," in Reinventing Anthropology, op. cit., p. 61.

[11] Berreman, Gerald D., "Bringing It All Back Home: Malaise of Anthropology," in ibid., pp. 83-97.

> Anthropology, reified as the study of man, is the study of men in crisis by men in crisis. Anthropologists and their objects, the studied, despite opposing positions in the "scientific" equation, have this much in common; they are both, if not equally, objects of contemporary, imperial civilization. The anthropologist who treats the indigene as an object may define himself as relatively free and integrated subject, a person, but that is an illusion. In order to objectify the other, one is, at the same time, compelled to objectify the self. On this score, the anthropologist betrays himself as inevitably as he does the native whom he examines.[13]

With regard to anthropology's principles, concepts, paradigms and methodology, let us take a few more samples from this praiseworthy book. William Willis suggests that anthropology must somehow capture the perspective of the subjects it investigates.

> Anthropology is in trouble, especially since World War II. The trouble arises especially from the emergence of black and other colored peoples around the world. This emergence demands drastic changes in anthropology; even if such changes are made, the survival of anthropology is not ensured. To meet the crisis, we need to know the actual conditions in which anthropology has developed and to know what

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[12] Szwed, John F., "An American Anthropological Dilemma," in ibid., p. 163.

[13] Diamond, Stanley, "Anthropology in Question," in ibid., p. 401. Emphasis is ours.

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> anthropology has been. This knowledge is only partially attained from the perspectives of white people (Maquet, 1964). We must also view anthropology from the perspectives of colored peoples, from Richard Wright's "frog perspectives: of looking upward from below" (1957, pp. 27-29). ... The "frog perspectives" reveal surprising insights about anthropology, and these insights are the skeletons in the anthropological closet.[14]

John Szwed notes that anthropologists have frequently confused material for cultural poverty:

> Witness the wide popularity of the notion of "cultural deprivation" (in regard of the American blacks) among politicians, educators, and social workers by which, in an irony cruel to anthropology, material is being confused with ideological poverty, culture now being given a remarkable restricted definition.[15]

Laura Nader notes that for anthropologists the most usual obstacle is phrased in terms of access. The powerful are out of reach from a number of different perspectives: they do not want to be studied; it is dangerous to study the powerful: they are busy people; they are not all in one place, and so on. But anthropologists have had problems of access everywhere they have gone; solving such problems of access is part of what constitutes "making rapport." In view of anthropologists' successes among peoples of the world who have been incredibly hostile, it is rather surprising that anthropologists could be so timid at home. She writes:

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[14] Willis, William, Jr., "Skeleton in Anthropological Closet," in ibid., pp. 122-216. Emphasis is ours.

[15] Szwed, op. cit., p. 162.

> Anthropologists might indeed ask themselves whether the entirety of field work does not depend upon a certain power relationship in favor of the anthropologist, and whether indeed such dominant-subordinate relationships may not be affecting the kinds of theories we are weaving. What if, in reinventing anthropology, anthropologists were to study the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of powerless, the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty?[16]

John F. Szwed remarks that Ann Fischer suggested that field work among lower class Afro-Americans lacks the exoticism that so appeals to anthropologists. Further, she argued that love of the informant and the anthropologist for each other is a prerequisite for sound anthropological research and one that is difficult to achieve among Afro-Americans. Quoting Margaret Mead, she insisted that it would be impossible for an anthropologist to convince ghetto residents that he has any respect for their way of life.[17]

On the basis of the foregoing citations from anthropologists' critical examination of their discipline, it stands out that anthropology is today on fire. We know, of course, that every science is limited by the specific object which it studies. As Max Scheler noted, according to Dewey, an object is named as such because it objects.[18] It resists being studied without due regard for itself by the mind that attempts to comprehend it. Dewey might have been referring to a merely material object, but the objection of the object assumes another dimension when the object in question is at last a human subject, a consciousness, a will, a freedom. For, on the one hand, the powerful, the wealthy, the modern, the one-time imperialist, the superior, the complex, and on the other hand, the powerless, the poor, and primitive, the one-time subjugated, the inferior and the simple -- all of these today do object and resist being studied by anthropology, as anthropologists themselves acknowledge. Thus, this situation creates a further limit for anthropology in regard to its object of scientific investigation. This is a serious dilemma for this science. Might this dilemma not be derived from the fact that the former set of "objectors" (the powerful) have been all too well informed by their knowledge of anthropology's unsavory, capricious and monological disquisitions about the latter (the powerless)? Might the latter not be resisting their being studied by anthropology because of their premonition that this sort of study has not been geared towards a genuine understanding and acceptance of their cultural differences? We do not forget that Kluckhohn proposed the superiority of anthropology over philosophy by reason of the former's development of the paradigm of the 'unconscious,' a theory that we will examine in the next chapter. Meanwhile, however, it seems to us that anthropology today faces the situation of a self-caused dissipation. It is interesting that anthropologists themsleves know this and are concerned.

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[16] Nader, Laura, "Perspectives from Studying Up," in ibid., p. 302. Emphasis is ours.

[17] Szwed, op. cit., p. 155.

[18] Scheler, Max, Man's Place in Nature, translated with intr. by Hans Meyerhoff (New York: The Noonday Press, 1970), pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

They propose reinventing anthropology with new paradigms and changed mental outlooks with regard to their methods and objectives. But the implementation of these new theories may involve unprecedented practical problems. For, as Karl Jaspers observes:

> The extent of man's capacity for monstrous deeds, of the intellectually gifted for delusions, of the seemingly decent person for malice, what is possible to the mob in the way of thoughtlessness, of short-sighted passivity, all this became real to an extent that the knowledge of man had to undergo a change. In brief, what formerly was not even so much as considered was now not merely possible but actual. History seemed to have a jolt. A subsequent consideration of the entirety of world history made it become clear, however, that these impossibilities were not at all new in their roots, but merely in their (particular) appearance, that the prejudice of an age had clouded our view in spite of the intellectual range of its consciousness.[19]

We are now better motivated to initiate a further philosophic critique of anthropology in order to ensure a complete eradication of its misinterpretations and, as a consequence, a proper introduction of the hermeneutic of the African culture.

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[19] Jaspers, Karl, "Philosophical Autobiography," in The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, The Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. 9, edited by Paul Arthur (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company, 1974), p. 60.

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CHAPTER IV

A FURTHER PHILOSOPHIC CRITIQUE OF ANTHROPOLOGY AS A PROXIMAL ENTRY INTO THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

There might be a basis for some degree of tolerance of anthropology's errors. For although anthropologists speak of the "unconscious," it seems that they themselves are quite unaware of the historical doctrinal psychologies under which they have been laboring. They are themselves unconscious of the sort of philosophies which sponsored colonial imperialism under whose patronage their science was founded. Dagobert Runes points out that philosophy has often served as a hidden justification of political and economic exploitation by the powerful.

> Such philosophies have been used right from Plato to the present era as the 'great rationale' by reformers as well as reactionaries, by usurpers as well as traditionalists, by kings and conquerors, to make vile and devious acts appear to be God-ordained, or a plan of public welfare. For Philip and Alexander, as a preamble to their bloody conquest, Aristotle wrote a touching thesis on the Divine division of men into free persons and slaves. From Plato to Hegel, from Hobbes to Stalin's Alexandrov, there stand the giant metaphysical bulwarks, defending the political atrocities of their scepter-wielding benefactors: Plato and Aristotle deemed common slavery a measure of Divine Providence; to them, the little man was meant only to serve in the shadow of the aristocratic rich, cultured, and bellicose. These two cardinal enemies of social equality dominated the realm of metaphysics for two thousand years. It is only with the discarding of their systems that social equality could begin, although nostalgic remembrances of the post-Socratic dream-world still linger on.[1]

It has been under the influence of this nostalgic remembrance that anthropologists weaved their scientific concepts and categorizations of man. Man could never be studied by anthropology as man because unconsciously anthropologists have not discarded the formulations of Plato, Aristotle, Hegel or Hobbes about man. Whitehead informs us that the whole of Western culture is but a footnote to Plato's doctrines, and Western imperialism is the foundation of anthropology as we know it today. It can therefore be understood by us how it came to be that Tylor could term certain races, e.g., the African, as being inferior to his own and study those races as inferior, or how Boas was able to state that the black man is the 'foot ball of anthropology.' Thus the sort of objectivity which anthropologists claim to aim at in their inquiry into other cultures must be questioned. For instance, one would by now have expected anthropologists to learn to call those peoples of Africa known to them as "The Bush Men" by the name those people call themselves. Anthropologists fail in not adopting the proper scientific methodology, that is, the phenomenological one, which alone is appropriate to a science of man.

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[1] Runes, Dagobert D., Pictorial History of Philosophy (Paterson, N. J.: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1963), p. viii. Emphasis is ours.

Kluckhohn quoted anthropology's concept of the "unconscious" as the principle by which his science establishes, firstly, the impact of culture on insane or mad people, and secondly, the impact of culture on the individual who gets distressed when he attempts to deviate from his culture's norms. Hence, for him, anthropology thus solves these problems which had puzzled philosophers all through the ages.

Another sense of the unconscious might be added in that Kluckhohn rates the peoples of those 'historyless' cultures which anthropology studies as "unconscious" because, on being questioned, they are not able to furnish chronologically the exact historical origin of the particular cultural phenomenon in question. Let us briefly state that in philosophy the theory of the "unconscious" so far antedates anthropology that anthropologists reveal their lack of the knowledge of the historical usage of that concept. Karl Jaspers gives us the following summary.

> To the Greeks this problem of Being was already present in myth. The clarity of the Greek gods was surrounded by the sublime imcomprehensibility of Fate, limiting their knowledge and power. Most of the philosophers touched incidentally, although in important ways, upon what was inaccessible to reason. Socrates listened to the forbidding voice of the uncomprehended daimon. Plato recognized madness, which if pathological is less than reason, but if divinely begotten, more: only through madness can poets, lovers, and philosophers come to a vision of Being. To be sure, according to Aristotle, in human affairs, happiness was the result of rational deliberation, but not totally; happiness could appear without and even opposed to deliberation. For Aristotle, there were men, the 'alogoi,' who had a better principle than deliberative reason; their affairs succeeded without and even counter to reason.[2]

Let us add that an African myth distinguishes two major types of the unconscious, the mad and the drunk: 'Once a mad man and another heavily drunk with wine picked up a quarrel as to which of them was the braver of the two. They were at a running distance to the sea. They decided to test it out. He would be the braver who would outrun the other and drowned himself faster. They took off. The former arrived first but halted at the brink of the sea. The latter arrived following but jumped headlong into the sea and drowned.'

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[2] Jaspers, Karl, Reason and Existenz, translated with an introduction by William Earle (New York: Noonday Press, 1968), pp. 20-21. Emphasis is ours.

According to the African culture very succinctly summarized in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, it is the highest abomination for a person to take away his own life (suicide) either by hanging, poisoning, or drowning.

> It is an offence against the Earth and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. ... We cannot bury him. Only strangers can. ... When he has been buried we will then do our duty by him. We shall make sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land.[3]

The drunkard in the above African theory of the unconscious knew the gravity of this cultural taboo. The insane person also knew it before his insanity became pathological. Obviously, the pathological situation conforms to Kluckhohn's anthropological theory of the unconscious. But what can he say to us of the former's action despite his knowledge of that cultural taboo? Secondly, what account can Kluckhohn give to us for the fact that those whom he terms unconscious, i.e., the primitive Africans, are themselves able to distinguish between two major levels of unconsciousness?

The fact is that anthropologists have failed to see that man biologically considered is inferior to the lower animals. These have their mode of existing in space and time built into their very nature. In other words, what is culture to man by his willed effort with other men is a pre-given factor in animals. Man, by the force of his own constitution as freedom, has had to establish his own culture. Man's initial consciousness of himself as contingent, finite, and self-insufficient stimulated him to seek a community with other men. It was therefore owing to his feeling and sensing of himself in what Karl Jaspers has called ultimate situations, namely, of guilt and dread, care and anxiety, struggle and death, that man originally sought and now seeks a culture of his own making. He must live in a social community if he is to be not a god and not a lower animal but 'man' situated in time and on the earth with a specific nature of his own. This community, this culture-making, is a framework which habitually contains human lives and gives meaning to the faithful acceptance and living out of these inescapable realities.

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[3] Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1974), p. 190.

Our point here is that if men did not initially experience and understand themselves as specified above, they would not have bothered to determine their own culture. But that initial experiencing and understanding of self is an act of consciousness. Nonetheless, it did have to be the ground and father of all other forms of consequent consciousness. Unconsciousness can never of itself beget consciousness; otherwise, ants and similar highly organized

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lower animals should be instructing us, human beings, on the highest modes of transcending or stretching to the beyond, which to us are the proper activities of consciousness, the activity of cipher readings. It follows that anthropologists have erred in characterizing any people as being unconscious. We do not, for instance, see how a woman in a so-called primitive culture engaged in weaving a basket or sculpturing a pot or producing any such culture materials can be represented as being unconscious of what she is doing. To be sure, that initial consciousness by which the African ancestors had built up that culture is the spiritual fiber which gives strength and solidity to all of that culture's norms, folklores, mental attitudes, values and so forth. It is a consciousness that lives ever anew in the consciousness of subsequent generations such that the meanings and intentions underlying their present lived cultural activities, behaviors, and expressivities were founded on the wisdom of their great, great ancestors all down the line. It is a consciousness that is spelled out in the actual living of the people where life meets life. That is why traditionality and historical consciousness are basic specifying notes of the African culture. We can rely on Bernard Lonergan, S. J., to substantiate our stand on this issue:

> One can begin, from people as they are. One can note that, apart from times of dreamless sleep they are performing intentional acts. They are experiencing, imagining, desiring, fearing; they wonder, come to understand, conceive; they reflect, weigh the evidence,

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> judge; they deliberate, decide, act. ... it is a matter of performing intentional acts; in short, such acts informed by meaning are precisely what gives significance to human living and, conversely, to deny all meaning to human life is nihilism.[4]

For Lonergan, therefore, meaningful performance constitutes human living just as common meaning is constitutive of community. For him, all the way up in a sublational order, a common field of experience, common and complementary ways of understanding, common judgments constituting a consensus, common commitments (the stuff of fidelity to one another and loyalty to the group) are the hard-won fruit of man's advancing knowledge of nature, of the gradual evolution of his social forms and of his cultural achievements. According to Richard E. Palmer, for Wilhelm Dilthey, whose authority we shall later make abundant use of, "experience, when it was seen as a unit of meaning, became knowledge, and thus there was in 'life itself' an 'immanent reflexivity.'" It is this already-given understanding of life that enables one to understand "expressions of life" in great art and literature.[5] We maintain that this is especially true of those expressions, art and literature, of one's own inherited culture. It must be noted that in Africa theory and practice have a singular uniqueness of simultaneity and inner complementarity in cultural living. Moreover, as

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[4] Lonergan, Bernard, S. J., Law for Liberty, edited by James B. Biechler (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1967), pp. 128-129.

[5] Palmer, Richard E., Hermeneutics: Interpretations Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 1969), pp. 177-78.

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Palmer presents Gadamer's theory:

> ... the past is not like a pile of facts which can be made an object of consciousness, but rather is a stream in which we move and participate, in every act of understanding. Tradition, then, is not over against us but something in which we stand and through which we exist; for the most part it is so transparent a medium that it is invisible to us ... as invisible as water is to a fish.[6]

It would be untenable, therefore, that an African sitting before the shrine of his ancestor and pouring libations to 'Amen' each of his supplications should be named unconscious of what he was doing.

We will now examine the African functional historical consciousness as a special qualifying note of the African culture. In tracing the goals and objectives of anthropology we quoted anthropologists as stating that their one aim was to study the "history-less" cultures of the world. Our question is, are there any such people? In order to answer this question, we must first consider briefly the hermeneutics of culture in general and introduce, more specifically, the issue of the hermeneutics of the African Traditional Culture.

To talk of a 'history-less' people or culture is a contradiction in terms. We make good this assertion by drawing once more from Palmer according to whom Dilthey does not weary of asserting that "man is an historical being." For Dilthey, history is not something past that stands over against us, as object. Historicality does not

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[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 176-77.

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point to the already clearly objectified fact that man is born, lives, and dies in the course of time. These facts say nothing about the true nature of man. What man is only history can tell him. What he is and what he wills, he experiences only in the development of his nature through the millennia and never completely to the last syllable, never in objective concepts but always only in the living experience which springs out of the depths of his own being. Man's self-understanding (and consequently another's empathetic understanding of him) must take a hermeneutical detour through fixed cultural expressions dating back over the past. For Dilthey, as man is continually taking possession of the formed expressions which constitute his heritage (a process which for us is constitutive of the _intrinsic_ modernness of a people), he becomes creatively _historical_. That man does not escape from history means that he is what he is in and through history. _The totality of man's nature is only history_. Cultural-historical relativism is thus operative in Dilthey for whom history is ultimately a series of world views. Hence, we have no firm and fixed standards of judgment for seeing the superiority of one world view over another. It is in no way possible to go back behind the relativity of historical consciousness. Our problem here, of course, is: can Africa be credited with her own historical conscious relativism? We will examine this below. Meanwhile, let us go ahead with Dilthey's hermeneutical analysis of historicality. We may recall

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that, in Chapter I, we dealt with the process whereby a people (whom we called the community of willers, a term which discloses the force of their intentionality to initiate a culture) originally did "stake" their culture, a process of stratifying cultural meanings out of their experiential life-world. We stress that the inner-tissue of a culture is made up of such sedimented meanings which can be elucidated by philosophy alone, and not by anthropology. For Dilthey, 'meaning' always stands in a horizontal context that stretches into the past and into the future. Thus, temporality gradually becomes an intrinsic part of the concept of historicality. In such wise, therefore, historicality (or traditionality) comes to refer to man's dependence on history for his self-understanding and self-interpretation, and to man's creative finitude in determining his own essence historically, and also to the inescapability of history and the intrinsic temporality of all understanding. There is no conception of unity of life and life's expressions without the conception of historicality. Man, for Dilthey, therefore is a 'hermeneutical animal' who understands himself in terms of interpreting (by spelling out that interpretation principally through living it out) a heritage and shared world bequeathed him from the past, a heritage constantly present and active in all his actions and decisions.[7]

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[7] *Ibid*., pp. 116-18.

A people's culture, therefore, is that heritage and shared world bequeathed to them from the past. Culture is a people's historicality as specified above in Dilthey. It is within the totality of the impact of their historicality, an impact that is intrinsic to their being and existence in the world, that a people act as they do, behave as they do. For historicality is the stream whose waters are the people's meanings in which and through which their life meets their life contextually. From the foregoing it follows that anthropologists have erred by stigmatizing any people as _history-less_. Emil L. Fachenheim re-enforces our view when he states:

> ... apart from history, man's very being, _qua_ being and _qua_ human, is deficient. Man is what he becomes and has become, and the processes of becoming which make him distinctively human are historical. But what makes history distinctively historical is human action.[8]

That is why we agree with the interpretation of Hans-Georg Gadamer, as presented by Palmer, that: "The present is seen and understood only through the intentions, ways of seeing, and preconceptions bequeathed from the past."[9]

But what anthropologists mean by "history-less" might be unprinted history whose 'books' we do not have in the libraries. In that case, what they look for is history that is written 'about,' not one that is already written but in scripts other than the Western alphabets. For, if a culture lacks altogether the records of itself and the processes by which it is handed down, from where then may archeologists, ethnographers, ethnologists and anthropologists obtain the data upon which their recordings might claim any measure of validity? But because the recordings of these sciences are about such data, we term them a 'history that is written about.' It is the very data themselves that we name the already written history of a culture. Every culture has its own dynamic, living history because it discloses itself through the on-going human activities of its people in time and space.

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[8] Fackenheim, Emil L., _Metaphysics and Historicity_, The Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee: Milwaukee University Press, 1961), p. 5.

[9] Palmer, _op_. _cit_., p. 176.

/ We can now apply these concepts to the African culture. There are three major streams through which this culture historically flows. Firstly, we have its dynamic, ongoing oral transmission, what we may call the 'verbal-scripts.' Here we have the African culture itself recorded in the everyday African myths. These myths give the people their realities. Their notions, basic concepts and ideas of these realities are embedded in these myths. The same is also true of their idioms, poesis, proverbs, and folktales. The varied types of the traditional African music rhapsodically conjure up and attune every person into an active awareness of his belongingness with his cultural setting. There are no dimensions of the existence of beings and the human acts of existing in the world that are not touched 'groundedly' by these sound or verbal scripts.

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That is why the faculty of hearing is the most prominent among the Africans. From the earliest stages of growth, the young are taught at all times and places by these stories and sayings and thus they effortlessly learn the inner-meanings of their cultural life-style. These inner-meanings are the existential content of these stories, sayings, and music. Janheinz Jahn in his Muntu has this to say:

> Both western and African culture possessed writing, one an alphabetical script, the other a drum script. ... In Africa the official drummer was not simply a conveyor of information: he presented on ceremonial occasions news of the ancestors, most sacred Nommo, the Epics of the past ... The official drummers were the historians of Africa.[10]

Within this historical stream we must include the traditional African names of persons which have this special and immediate efficacy in taking the mind directly to the ultimate ground and source of man's being, or his superiority of worth over all the other existents of the universe. 'Chikelu' (the author of man is the King God), 'Chinakpunnwa' (He is the sculptor of children), 'Nwakaaku' (a child is greater than all wealth), are some examples. We will take up the catalogue of African names when we show the Africans' modes of transcending in which the essence of human nature is located. We are here considering the question of Africa's historical "scripts."

Secondly, we have the African cultural history as recorded in the yearly multiple feasts and the daily cere-

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[10] Jahn, Janheinz, Muntu, Chapter 7 (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), pp. 187-189.

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monials. These feasts successively mark the cycle of the seasons. The rituals and varied forms of sacrifices to the gods of each season reenact the primordial notions, meanings and thus the historical significance of such feasts. Marriage ceremonies, and ceremonies surrounding the birth of each child, the age-set initiation ceremonies, the traditional title-taking ceremonies and the funeral ceremonies so surround the Africans with their life sustaining inherited cultural history that they are tuned into that operation of historical understanding in which the mind grasps the mind of the other person. These feasts and ceremonials generate in the Africans their best contact with life itself. Through them they at one and the same time re-experience the world of their ancestors and achieve a lived experience of themselves. The Africans' shared-world is revitalized by these feasts and ceremonies which at the same time constitute the transmitting processes of the underlying spirit of their cultural expressions. We can term them Africa's 'festal-ceremonial scripts.' In these feasts and ceremonials we have the texture of the Africans' living experience in which their cultural meanings are immanent and to which their behaviors refer. This is so because they form a recurrent whole in which their 'pasts' are made to live anew in their 'presents' and their 'futures' are already projectionally operative in the same present by their acts of intentionality. For each of these feasts and ceremonials generates in the African an ardent anticipation for the others to follow in the order of their intrinsic relationship. In their intrinsic unity, these historical feasts and ceremonials form a horizon of related parts in which and through which the Africans freely enter into an understanding relationship or interaction of the individual person and the encompassing general spirit of the people. That is why according to Palmer, for Dilthey, this phenomenon is a matter of interaction of the individual person and the objective Geist within a hermeneutical circle which presupposes both acting together in accordance with that meaning.

With regard to the third of these major streams, we have the African cultural history historically recorded in the African cultural archetypes, signs, symbols and 'cipher scripts.' We are familiar with the Biblical Garden, the archetype that has shaped and still does shape the Christian culture. If one is to study the American culture, one does not do so adequately unless the American "frontier," and the American "Machine in the Garden" are considered.

Similarly, the Ajo Ofia, i.e., the Bad Bush, the Ofia Odo, and Ekwulu Mmanwu, respectively meaning the Ancestral Groves, and the Sanctuary of the Spirits, then the Sacred Rivers, the groves and sanctuaries or shrines of the Earth, the Sea, the Sun and the Thunder gods are some of the archetypes of the African culture. They are complex structures. They are sacred places. They are seen everywhere. They are usually located in prominent places in African communities. Inversely, the places are prominent because of their occupancy by these archetypes. To raise the question as to the time of their establishment is beside the point. No one needs to know. It is their historic living significance that counts. It is just enough that these sacred places are the focus of the community. They are scripts of such esoteric nature that no member of the community can fail to read them adequately. They are the shaping spirit of their culture and social living. They are the internal spirit, which gives the anchoring meanings to their cultural behaviors. They form the historical springboard which connects one cultural image or form with another, and thereby integrates all of the community's lived experience -- past, present and future.

As signs, these archetypes are normative principles. Like the traffic red light, they indicate to the African a here-and-now course of behavior to perform. You do not, for instance, dare continue to pursue a wild game that has run into the Bad Bush, nor fish in the Sacred River. Dare to act contrary-wise and you shall learn from your community the weight of cultural sanctions. A foreigner might attempt it but not without the community's resistance to such an act, although at the same time with a measure of tolerance, for, as the saying goes: "ihe onye na amaro, adi egbu ya," that is, the forbidden which a person is ignorant of, does not kill him.

As symbols, they conjure up in the African a personal

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feeling of his culture. They bring home to him an existential sense of the gestalt content of his culture's values. These archetypal symbols in their intrinsic interrelatedness embody the Unity of men, the worlds of the organic and unorganic beings, the worlds of spirits -- dead ancestors, gods, other spirits and God Himself. This Unity is the center and core of the African culture. It is a dynamic, functional or existential Unity, the formal cause of authentic African cultural behaviors. It is here that we notice the Africans' sense of being emerging more disclosedly in this work. For the African, man alone, that is, in isolation from the rest of beings, is not the exclusive author of history. In other words, history from the African perspective is the making of the totality of beings. For the Africans there is really no man without Nature and in Nature. There is therefore no authentic phenomenal human act from which Nature in Its Totality can be divorced. Being and beings comprise the name, Nature. To speak of human freedom without reference to the concourse of Nature would be to the Africans mere _flatus_ _vocis_. For freedom itself, entitatively considered, is part of Nature and its acts are 'a fortiori' of Nature. It is for this reason that we stated earlier that one of the basic specifying notes of the African culture is the African historical consciousness. Let us point out, however, that these African archetypes as symbols indicate a certain unity in all the stratifying activities for meaningful living. It would be interesting also to note further that at this level or moment the role of archetypes as the 'commanding form' of culture, as Susanne Langer herself might have named it, is getting built up in the individual African. We observe here, significantly enough, that there are certain archetypes which were structured by Nature prior to man's participation in the process but which in themselves could not become archetypes without man's adoption of them as pre-givens. An example of such an archetype is the Valley which to the Africans is the symbol of fertility. But the archetypes we have been considering are those designed and assembled by the forerunners of the African culture. The semblance, such as the grove and sanctuary of the earth god, usually comprises the congeries of varied types of trees and plants, weeds, pots holding water, broken and worn out utensils, worn out hoes and knives, heaps of stones, horns of varied animals, feathers of birds, cloths and so forth. A figure molded of red earth assumes the central position and is surrounded by these varied things. It is a figure which all through the ages is constantly bathed with the sacrificial blood of varied animals and wine. It is the Earth-god. We will take up its full religious consideration later. But the semblance as a work of art, since it embodies all manner of physical objects, has been a product of Africans' overt response to their inward feeling of the Unity of beings. This unity has been captured and tracked down by the whole which this work of art presents. It is a Form into which each of the

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material objects cedes its individual objectifiability. It is now an ordered, well organized whole that transcends all its parts. It is a perennial historic cultural 'cipher-script.' It has an existential message: the message of Transcendence to both the individual and the community. For Karl Jaspers, "To perceive it means to break through the tangled web of empirical realities and cogent validities in order to stand directly before the unknown," the beyond that is not here, but all the same the transcendence that can be found only in unity with the world.[10] What happens in genuine transcending (which is the ultimate intentionality of the African archetypes as cipher-scripts), is the deepest possible affirmation of the world because the language transfigures the world, and what we secretly hear in it is the voice of transcendence. In the split, however, there could be no affirmation of the world without delusion, for an opaque existence has no satisfaction in itself. Thus African believers use this language to overcome the intellect which for Jaspers either absolutizes the difference between the world and transcendence or denies it altogether, and to try to objectify the dialectics that are originally present in the cipher-script but speculatively accessible only in the form of a thought voided by its own motion. Jaspers observes:

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[10] Jaspers, Karl, Philosophy Vol. III, translated by E. B. Ashton (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 120-30.

> In random exegesis, as supposed knowledge the point of departure is always definite, the interpretation is endless, and the goal of interpretation is a finite being. [But] in interpreting the cipher script, the point of departure is the infinite presence of transcendence, the cipher is finite and definite, and the goal of interpretation is that indefinite, already present infinite,[11]

which being present, gives thereby substantial grounding to man's phenomenal existence.

Thus in Africa's 'cipher-script' we have that ever-present and recurrent substantial historical awareness of that Whole in terms of which the activities of human living in the world are meaningful. That is what an authentic culture, such as the African, can be all about.

We conclude this chapter by stating from the evidence of the foregoing that anthropologists by terming any people 'history-less' have disclosed their lack of the knowledge of man in general and, in particular, their misunderstanding of the culture they claim to have studied. Having indicated these errors, we may now proceed in the following chapters, with the full interpretation of the inner content of the African Traditional Culture through an elucidation of that culture's institutions. We would like to point out that, in the light of the above analysis, there may be some ambiguity to Mircea Eliade's analysis in The Myth of the Eternal Return and The Sacred and the Profane of the tendency of archaic societies to attempt to overcome history

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[11] *Ibid.*

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through the ritual repetition of archetypal histories.[12] In so far as his theory refers to a "flight from the terrors of secular history," his analysis would apply to African culture which refuses all purely secular self-understanding. But Africans have no desire to dissolve history, in the sense of an attempt to live outside of history; rather, they perpetually bring their past to bear on the present by making the primordial causal principles re-live in what is done today.

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[12] Eliade, Mircea, The Myth of the Eternal Return Or, Cosmos and History, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974); Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959).

CHAPTER V

A GESTALT UNIVERSE DESPITE ITS DUAL NATURE; THE 'PERSONALITY' OF EACH OF THE CHIEF ELEMENTS AND THESE ELEMENTS AS HIEROPHANIES

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In this chapter, we shall present a view of the universe as the Africans conceive and accept it, live in it, and behave in accordance with it as their cultural environment. The question then is how do the Africans perceive the world of their sensory experience, that is to say, what does the world mean to them? We ask the question in this fashion because the principal meanings according to which the Africans live their practical daily life are the meanings they have extracted from the universe of various objects or beings. These meanings give us the Africans' horizon of vision. Therefore, a careful phenomenological analysis of these meanings should yield an understanding of the fundamental concepts, ideas, and principles of the African culture. We shall organize this analysis by investigating the clusters of meaning disclosed in the African understanding of the chief elements of Earth, Water, Air and Fire as no longer purely material instruments but as ciphers which reveal their spiritual realms. In these realms these elements are deified and personified by the Africans. As gods they prescribe the African cultural norms and moral principles. It will then become clear that these norms and morals are universally held as sacred and hence treated with much reverence by the Africans, because logically they have a special flavor of transcendency. Finally, we will show the symbolism that these beings of the universe constitute for the Africans and thus we will demonstrate that their practical and symbolic views of the world embody their theoretical ones.

As an illustration of this intimate link between practical and theoretical understanding in African culture, Janheins Jahn, in his Muntu, quotes an African writer, Adebayo Adesanya.

> This is not simply a coherence of fact and faith, nor of reason and traditional beliefs, nor of reason and contingent facts, but a coherence or compatibility among all the disciplines. A medical theory, e.g., which contradicted a theological conclusion was rejected as absurd and vice versa. This demand of mutual compatibility among all the disciplines considered as a system was the main weapon of Yoruba thinking. God might be banished from Greek thought without any harm being done to the logical architecture of it, but this cannot be done in the case of the Yoruba. In medieval thought, science could be dismissed at pleasure, but this is impossible in the case of Yoruba thought, since faith and reason are mutually dependent. In modern times, God even has no place in scientific thinking. This was impossible to the Yorubas since from the Olodumare an architectonic of knowledge was built in which the finger of God is manifest in the most rudimentary elements of nature. Philosophy, theology, politics, social theory, land, law, medicine, psychology, birth and burial, all find themselves logically concatenated in a system so tight that to subtract one item from the whole is to paralyse the structure of the whole.[1]

Jahn has rightly used the above citation in support of his thesis that the traditional African view of the world is one of extraordinary harmony. For, this formulation of Adesanya gives us the true existential mental orientation of the Africans. It is the traditional Africa's cultural principle, the basic criterion by which all things and life itself must be measured for their meaningfulness and fittedness. The formula itself rates highest among all the traditional

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[1] Jahn, op. cit., pp. 96-97. Emphasis is ours.

Africa's values. It possesses a dynamic, functional and permeating force and without it there is no African culture. Every single institution of this culture has this African sense of unity as its foundation as well as its sustenance. This explains why, for instance, in the African kinship institution a deep sense of necessary unity underlies what anthropologists have wrongly termed an extended family system. In this whollistic view of the universe, no one is ever seen or left in isolation. Hence, we have an explanation of why an African has a dread of the sanction of ostracization by his community. Moreover, this is why the cult of dead ancestors is a constant phenomenon among all Africans, a cult which is at the same time the pointer to the strength of African historical consciousness and an obligation imposed upon every African to perpetuate his cultural history.

We may now ask how the traditional Africans arrived at such a basic cultural concept. How is it that, according to the Africans, to subtract one item of existence from the whole is to paralyze the structure of the whole? How then did the Africans initially conceive, and how do they continue to conceive, existence? In other words, what fundamental meaning have they made of the universe? We must understand why in the African religion, for instance, the Earth is a god and is worshipped daily. Moreover, both the Sea and the Sun are also divinized, and not infrequently the Wind, through whose symbolic power certain aversional sacrifices are made to ward off evil spirits. In Africa,

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also, the Earth is held and venerated as a Supreme Mother of all that exists in the world, including man himself.

To the Africans the greatest wonderment of all is that of Existence itself in the first instance. What is existence? Existence to the Africans cannot be questioned directly. It remains a mystery, an enigma. But by observation the Africans see grass, weeds and plants which had not been there before sprout out of the womb of the Earth. From this perception the Africans sense that the Earth has the power of Fertility, whose generative force is the principal source of these new existents. But the Earth left to itself cannot bring into existence these things which were not there before. What good is an arid soil? The Earth needs the waters of the seas, rivers and rains. The Egyptians of North Africa have a special reverence to the Nile River and offer sacrifices to it so that it may bring its waters in moderation to aid the Earth's fertility for a happy yield of their crops.[2] The southern African rain-makers, whom we prefer to call the 'priests of rains and waters,' preform rituals to the sea gods for the same purpose.[3] Moreover, in the farms Africans prune off the leafy branches of trees which might shade and shield the direct benevolent actions of the Sun's heat and the wind on the soil and the crops.

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[2] Willson, John A., Before Philosophy (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 40-46.

[3] From my personal experience, as on occasions of funerals or title ceremonies, etc.

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This short account reveals the manner in which the Africans grasp the meaning of the four chief elements of the world -- Earth, Water, Air and Fire. It is through their combined functionality that the crops which sustain humans are produced. Each of the elements needs the others so as itself to manifest and fulfill its own function. This fact has a grave existential import to the Africans; from it the idea of the universe as an organic unity is formed. It is here that we have the very origin of that Africa's whollistic view of things and all life of which Adesanya speaks. It gives us the ontology of Africa's basic principle of viewing the world itself and then the world of men as an internally related whole. It is an enduring African cultural principle because of the 'timelessness' of the source from which it has been extracted. For these four elements of the universe never desist from their whollistic function of introducing that which comes into existence in time. This also explains why Africans insist that to be human one must be at-one-ment with nature, the world and the universe. These chief elements of the world have given the Africans the ultimate principle by which they accept existence despite its vicissitudes. This functional unity of these four major elements is as much a given as the basic principle that Africans extract from it. Moreover, the Africans are ever-grateful for this given unity which has provided them with their Gestalt Universe.

But then a further question ensues: how did the Earth with her power of Fertility come about in the first place? Why should the earth need the ancillary functional powers of water, the sun, and the wind in order to display her power of fertility? In other words, existence is still being questioned as to how it came about.

Let us observe here that the earth's fertility is another idea fundamental to African cultural living and expressivity. The earth is a mother which props up and feeds the Africans. The efficacy and symbolism of the earth by reason of her fertility is a key principle among Africa's basic cultural themes. But how did the earth acquire both her power of fertility and her dependence upon the ancillary functional powers of water, air and fire? The earth did not endow herself with that power; otherwise, she should not need the forces of these other elements. Whence then comes the earth's power of fertility to introduce the existence of the existents? Here the African makes a spontaneous leap prompted by reason to a super-human power. In this process reason and faith complement one another. Adesanya's dictum in the above quotation is here substantiated. This leap, the fact of it, is another key phenomenon in African culture. It is a leap prompted by what Mircea Eliade has called:

> hierophany, [by which] man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. ... the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural "profane" world. ... By manifesting the sacred, any object

> becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu.[4]

It is in this leap and by it that we have the birth of African traditional religion. For that super-human, supersensible power is the African's God, the Ultimate Foundation of all beings. God therefore, through the mediating power of the Earth's Fertility, a power He has endowed her with, is the author of existence and all forms of life. But an even further question suggests itself to the African: what might have been the original state of the earth; what was its very early structure? An African myth gives us the answer: 'Okpoko is an early bird. He has a prominent and over-exaggerated head, very disproportionate with the rest of its body. The reason for this awkward arrangement was that he came into existence when the earth was marshy and swampy. His father died and he could not make a grave to bury him because of the swamp. So he opened his head and buried the father there. The same process he adopted when his mother died shortly after. This is why his head acquired such large proportions. But later on, the earth spat off the waters and so the seas were formed and the earth got hardened and was now able to use her power of fertility to produce grass, trees, food and crops as well as to sustain animals and men.'[5] This myth confirms once again that the earth did not produce herself but was made by the supersensible power, God.

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[4] Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

[5] This myth is taken from personal memory.

We have thus far considered the African's view of the world at the level of what Martin Heidegger calls the world as an "instrument" or "tool,"[6] and then moved on to the view of the world as "hierophany." It was through this latter consideration that certain ultimate ideas, notions and basic principles of the African traditional culture have themselves come to the light of day.

But the African mind's perception of the world does not stop there. Our earlier question was concerned with how these chief elements themselves came to be gods for the Africans. The African mind goes beyond the mere physicalness, the mere materiality of these elements to their spiritual realm. We may ask, by what mental process or logic the Africans ascend to that sacred realm of the elements. The answer is simple. According to the Africans, power of production is the only true power a being has. It is a power that they beheld with awe because they see it as derived from the power of God in producing the world. The power to destroy that which the destroyer cannot himself bring about, i.e., existence itself, in the ultimate analysis is no power at all. God is sacred and commands man's veneration because He has created or produced the universe and all things therein. Existence, the fact of it, still remains a mystery to the Africans. Thus with the Africans, openness of mind to the mystery is a sound logical approach. The Earth has her native power of fertility by which she produces. She is therefore an extension of the divine activity. She is therefore a god. By the same train of thought, the sun, the sea and the wind are gods. They are sacred. The sacred by its own intrinsic power, even though it (the power) is given by the King God or Chiukwu, nevertheless commands man's veneration and gratitude. Thus, according to this African process of thinking, each of these elements is a god, though a servant god to Chiukwu. Thus we have by the African mode of perception an earth that is no longer purely material earth but in essence, a god. So it is also with the other elements.

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[6] Heidegger, Being and Time, op. cit., pp. 95-107.

What this account gives us is another of the African basic cultural concepts which enter into and permeate through the people's cultural overt behavior patterns and expressivities. We will take up a more detailed explication of this sacral view of the universe in a later chapter which will treat the African religious institution. Let us point out here, however, that the Earth and the Sun are to the Africans not only gods but the ever-watching Eyes of God over men's actions. Hence, the Earth because of her primacy over the other elements by virtue of her Fertility, communicates ethical directives to men.

The question of these servant gods introduces another consideration that must be made in regard to the African

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cosmology. 'Madu bu ma' (man is a spirit) is a traditional African saying, and constitutes a precise definition of man. As evidence of this attitude let us consider the occult phenomena which are daily experiences in African culture. Secret societies abound. An occult phenomenon whether of the good or of the evil type is an event that takes place at the special rendezvous of men's spirits and the non-human spirits. We may ask what exactly is the condition for the possibility of this cultural practice? What is the belief operative behind it? How did the African originally experience the world so as to arrive at such a belief?

For the Africans the world is dual in nature. As Eliade notes:

> The world that surrounds us, then, the world in which the presence and the works of man are felt -- the mountains that he climbs, populated and cultivated regions, navigable rivers, cities, sanctuaries -- all these have an extraterrestrial archetype, be it conceived as a plan, as a form, or purely and simply a "double" existing on a higher cosmic level.[7]

Beyond and over above the visible, tactile, physical world, there is for the Africans a non-visible, non-tactile world which envelopes the former. It permeates the former through and through; it is simultaneously within and outside of the earth and the seas. That enveloping world is the abode of the non-human spirits, both good and bad. Some of the good spirits or gods are the earth, sun, sea, sky and wind gods, as well as the gods of the chief crops and the ancestral gods comprised of the spirits of the dead ancestors, men and women who lived a good and virtuous life on earth. The bad spirits are those of men and women who lived evil and abominable lives on earth before their death. These latter spirits are confined to the 'Bad Bush' which, as we saw earlier, is their archetypal home or special abode. These bad spirits are circumscribed within this enveloping cosmos. The good spirits, however, reach the abode of the King God, Chiukwu, and come back to the invisible englobing cosmos so as to be near to the living in order to protect, guide and do them good. Among these good spirits is the Chi of each human person, a good spirit more or less similar to the Christian guardian angel. The only difference is that Chi is the spirit who is each person's unique, active and direct link with the Chiükwu. A person is truly sincere in his daily conduct if he acts as his chi would approve. Therefore, this chi belongs intimately and intrinsically to a person's freedom and conscience. A frequent African saying goes as follows: "Onye kwe chi ye okwe" (if a person willingly decides on a course of action, his chi acquiesces), because this personal spirit respects the person's freedom.

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[7] Eliade, Mircea, The Myth of the Eternal Return, Or, Cosmos and History, translated by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series XLVI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 9.

Let us return to our original question: how did the African arrive at the notion of and belief in such a spiritual world enveloping the visible one? As with every other people, fortunes and misfortunes are things of daily experience to the Africans. The saying is that 'if you see something dancing on top of the sea, you must know there is another something underneath the waters playing the tune.' So it is with all fortunes and misfortunes. Their causes are not too far off from the physical world of men. The good spirits, gods, are the ambassadors of the King God and authors of good fortunes. The bad spirits, circumscribed as they are in this enveloping non-visible world which is their hell, are the 'tune-players' of misfortunes.

From the above account we may deduce certain African moral principles. The belief is that for a man to be truly human he must be in constant companionship with the good spirits. These good servant gods have a power over the evil spirits, who try to avoid confrontation with the good spirits. One thing to be noted is that the good spirits always respect the freedom of man. If a man habitually chooses to do evil and abominates the land, then the good spirits restrain their protective power over such a one. The man now falls a victim to the evil spirits who take hold of him and confirm him in evil ways. He thus dies a bad man to return to the company of the bad spirits in the invisible cosmos. We observe here the first instance of the Africans' regard for human freedom. The African normally has a dread of these evil spirits, but everyone knows that he can overcome them by willingly keeping the laws of the land prescribed by the Earth-god. An African writer, Amos Tutuola, has written a most readable novel concerning this invisible world of spirits. He gives an account of his life in the 'Bush' of

Ghosts where he fell in among the evil spirits, and entitles his work My Life in the Bush of Ghosts.[8] Another African novelist, Chinua Achebe, in his Things Fall Apart, speaks of the "Egwugwu whose quavering voices ... filled the air as these spirits of the ancestors, just emerged from the earth, greeted themselves in their esoteric language."[9] Achebe is talking here of the good spirits who have emerged from the earth because the invisible enveloping world permeates the physical earth through and through.

This functional unity of the physical, usable world (the gestalt quality of the instrumental universe) with the personified, deified, unchanging and timeless world that has shedded its materiality to become the very being in which its ultimate meaning lies, is the environment in which the Africans "world" their world culturally.

But the above account does not exhaust the entire African conception of the world, which contains many layers of rich symbolic meaning. Let us start with the earth itself. The earth, because of her fertility, is the archetype of all forms of maternity. She is the symbol of love because she mothers and cares for all things that exist and reserves a special tenderness toward man. Because she collects and adopts all the functional qualities of the other chief elements to form a necessary unity for production, she is to the

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[8] Tutuola, Amos, My Life in the Bush of Ghosts (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1954).

[9] Achebe, op. cit., p. 84. Emphasis is ours.

Africans a symbol of unity. The earth thus becomes a prominent existential symbol of unity. The earth is the Geist of the African community. When the assembly of elders reach a decision for their community, that decision and the course of action that it prescribes become the 'Word' of the land. In other words, the earth symbolizes the common spirit, common agreement and the unified mind of the people. That is why Karl Jaspers reaches us in a striking manner because for him, in the words of Leonard Ehrlick, "ruling comprises communicative sharing of the responsibility of decision with those who are ruled by virtue of a reference to what transcends any one man and all men, such as the law."[10] Africans would add the phrase, "the law of the land or the Word of the land." Because the earth is sacred by reason of her power of fertility, by extension, the woman is sacred because she has a womb and the power of giving birth to life. But the earth has a special mysterious power. She is both male and female within her entity and being. She is both father and mother all at once, so that for the African, "father-land" is implicative of "mother-land." The earth ultimately symbolizes Being itself, the source and ground of all beings. In Being itself, there can be no imaginable distinction between male and female.

All these symbolisms of the earth have a special practical cultural significance to the Africans. An African is

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[10] Ehrlick, Leonard, Karl Jaspers: Philosophy as Faith (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), p. 147.

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authentic to himself when in his conscience and consciousness he is one with the earth. To be one with the earth is to be one with the whole of nature of which all men form a part. Moreover, an African does not dare betray the earth. Ethically, to do harm to another person is to offend the earth, the supreme and universal mother of all. The earth is richly normative in that she prescribes the special African cultural virtue, that of loving contest. It is here that we have the ontological foundation of that everyday symbolic prayer and metaphorical expression of good will toward all, that is on the lips of everyone, namely: "Egbe belu, Ugo belu, nke si ibeya ebena, nku kwalu ya." Translated into English the prayer says the following: "to perch on the ground occasionally and not to be perpetually in flight is a necessity to the life of both the hawk and the eagle, but should either of them attempt to deny the other a perching place, may its wings wither off." Finally, the earth, the father-land, is a home or a framework which habitually contains the African's temporal existence and in which he "awaits upon,"[11] to borrow a term from Martin Heidegger, his very ultimate situation and unconditional imperative, which is death or the final passage into the supra-sensible world of continued and interminable existence.

We may now move on to the symbolism of the Sun (fire). Existentially, the night with its darkness is the opposite

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[11] Heidegger, Being and Time, op. cit., pp. 386-87.

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of the sun. "Uchichi kpu okpu." Darkness is a concealer. The sun is hermeneutical because in the light of day, that is, of the sun, that which was hidden by darkness becomes visible. In other words, the 'distance' by darkness becomes near in virtue of the sun's light. Thus the sun to the Africans is the symbol of understanding and communication between persons. "Does the sun not shed his light in your compound," is a question addressed to the fool. The sun is also the symbol of the equality of all men because it sheds its light on both the rich and the poor, on the young and the old, on men as well as on women. It is the symbol of the birth of a child because it gives birth to day. That is why the naming ceremony of a newly-born child, usually done on the twenty-eighth day, is performed before the sun god's shrine. Because the sun conquers darkness, it is symbolic of the power of man's spirit over the power of the evil spirits, the infernal ones of darkness. Darkness is the symbol of nothingness and that is why, according to the Africans, blindness is to be abhored because it reduces a man to a nearness to nothingness, a state of ignorance of being. Again, the saying is that if you send a one-eyed person on a mission to observe something for you, you have to ask him to do so again, so that at the second instance, he shall have seen with two eyes. For the Africans the two eyes of a person form a necessary whole of the person, an anatomical whole for the adequate posture of participating fully in the knowledge of beings made possible by the light of the sun.

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Thus the sun gives the Africans a special emphasis on the importance of viewing the universe as an organized functional whole.

Let us now consider the seas. The sea god is the most feared of all the gods. When this god sends the floods of its waters, both the lives of men and of crops are taken away. When it sends too little or none at all of its waters, the same calamity befalls all life. The seas are a special dwelling place of the evil spirits. That is why the diviners, the fortune-tellers and those members of very esoteric organizations devoted to occult phenomena, play a significant role in the African society. They have a commune with these evil spirits. They prescribe what sacrifices must be made by both private persons and the general community. They know into what parts of the sea a person must throw the sacrificial objects and at what parts the person must take a bath purificative of the incursions of the evil spirits. Moreover, these things are usually performed in the silent dark of the night in an atmosphere of fear. The seas, however, are symbolic of the immensity and the transcendental powers of Being. Thus, the sea is phenomenally more of a cipher-script in the African culture than it is symbolic. It elicits in the African the feeling of the awe and sublimity of Being. Thus its existential import is its power to produce a live consciousness and a dynamic sense of the absoluteness of the source of all existence. Hence, the sea is a paradoxical element. On the one hand, it instills fear

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and almost a psychological despair of any meaningfulness to human existence in the world but, on the other hand, because of its unfathomable sublimity and unconceptualizable depths, it furnishes the African with a certain hope and belief in the meaningfulness and reality of human existence. We should note here that the human act of existing is a being which itself is to be accepted by faith. For everywhere and at each of life's angles, life itself is a woeful thing because of the transitoriness of temporal things. The sea to the African is a special cipher-script, a special language of transcendence of Being. As a message of transcendence, the sea makes life, that is to say, human existence, an acceptable thing in the fashion in which it has been given to us. The Africans, therefore, without any further and unnecessary mental activity of analysis, simply accept existence with special gratitude in a profoundly religious act. Thus, once again we encounter the Africans' power of mental abstraction. For now, the sea is no longer the material sea but its very objective essence or nature, a metaphysical objectivity, whose meaning lies in its cipher message of transcendence, the source and ground of the meaningfulness of all forms of existence.

We may now discuss the wind. The wind to the Africans symbolizes the power of 'a wiping-away' of evil. That is why those sorts of sacrifices made by the Africans to avert and avoid a possible approach or subtle establishment of the evil spirits' union with a person are usually made in

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an open space, and especially at crossroads, where the strong wind will blow off the evil to a sort of "no-whereness" (a symbol for the Africans of nothingness). Thus the wind comes to symbolize the purificative power of the ritual itself. It is a power which the Africans have over the powers of all the evil spirits put together. By reason of this interpretation the wind roots in the African the assured hope in the meaningfulness of his existence. He does not therefore try to fly away from his existence as long as he maintains good relations with the good spirits and gods. This symbolism of the wind is extracted from the African's meteorological experience of the actions of the wind in its relation to the sky. At times, the sky is richly pregnant with rain clouds, but then frequently the male wind, "Oke ikuku," steps in and dispels the rain. In other words, the wind blows off the impending rains from the sky. This action of the wind can be beneficient to the farmers whose crops would otherwise be innundated by the floods of the rains. At other times the wind compels the sky to let go her rains for the ruination of the crops. The wind thus becomes the symbol of the mysterious actions and powers of the spirits. But the wind, like the sea, is a paradoxical element: it does good and it does evil. When it assumes the form of a tornado, the wind blows and tends to knock down everything in its way: houses, fruit trees and immature fruits. It can bring down the rains of the sky in an undesirable quantity. However, at other times the gentle wind mitigates the scorching heat of the burning sun. But over and above all these effects, the wind is the cause of the two major seasons of the African continent. The dry season known as the Harmattan is brought about by the cold, dry, thirsty heavy winds. This wind dispels the wind of the rainy season. The Africans interpret this phenomenon as the wind overcoming itself by assuming a different form and thus introducing the succession of the African seasons. Through this consideration the wind is associated with the image of the cause of life's destiny. "What wind blows in your compound?" is a question that has an existential ontological significance to every African. It has this significance in that one has no choice with regard to the human situations that the winds bring about. One has only to accept the various winds as the ultimate examination of life's situations. In this way, the wind also has a special transcendental message of Being. It instills in the African the sense of responding to his situational vocation, to that dimension in which he is a being whose name is struggle. By the force of the wind, man makes an effort to protect himself against the hardships of the seasons brought about by that same enigmatic spirit, the wind. Hence, the wind for the Africans is a god of a singular puzzlement. Like the sea, it is a mysterious god. The sky is the embodiment of all the coelestial beings while the earth is the embodiment of all the terrestrial beings. But the wind, as we have seen above, has a sway over both. The wind, therefore, symbolizes an all-embracing power of Being over beings. Thus, the cosmogonic image of the wind is one of those most basic covert principles of African cultural historical behavior. The wind suggests to the Africans the notion of the unity of the universe. Those beings of the heavens symbolized by the sky or Igwe and those of the lower regions symbolized by the Earth or Ani, are existentially synthesized by the force of the wind. We must observe here that when an African says to another, 'Igwe na Ani na afui,' the heavens and the earths are watching you, i.e., as to what manner of conduct you adopt in your daily relational acts with others, that African has thereby made the very ultimate utterance designed to recall the other person to his senses. This prayer asks that the individual change his ways of behavior toward others, for those others are also protected and guarded by the heavens and the earth. This is a belief introduced by the action of the wind, which reaches the heavens and the earths. The wind has such interacting power from the earth to the sky and from the latter to the former that in it we have the ultimate foundation for the possibility of the African myth recollected by E. Bolanji Idowu in his book, Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief.

> What is now our earth was once a watery, marshy waste. Up above was the sky heaven which was the abode of Olodumare and the divinities, with so many other beings. The watery waste constituted, in a way, the sporting place for those dwellers above. Upon it they used to descend by strands of spider's web which also formed bridges by which they walked over it. Some of them came down from time to time for the purpose of hunting. ... It would seem that when the world began, everyone could travel to heaven and back as he wished and that all could have im-

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> mediate, direct contact with Olodumare. The oral traditions say that heaven was very near to the earth, so near that one could stretch up one's hand and touch it. Whether this is taken literally or interpreted as a metaphor, there is no doubt that our people believe that there was a time when there were no limitations at all to communication between heaven and earth.[12]

This quote is cited not so much to underscore the myth which Idowu writes about as to highlight the Africans' notion of the wind which is the primordial condition for the possibility of the myth. A myth is no mere whimsical, or purely imaginary, concoction of a people; it always has some sound justification.

In summary, through the above examination of the African cosmology, we have been able to give a coherent interpretation of the ontological foundations of that culture's primary concepts and ideas. We have seen the primal origin of Africa's whollistic view of all aspects of life, all forms of existence, in the theme of Fertility, through which the sacred makes itself manifest. Moreover, we investigated in some detail the secondary theme of the manifestation of the divine in sea, sun, and winds. From these various hierophanies of the sacred beings is derived the African religion, which we will presently examine in the next chapter.

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[12] Idowu, E. Bolanji, Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief (London: William Gloves and Sons, Ltd., 1962), pp. 11, 19-21.

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CHAPTER VI

THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION

> How can the untutored African conceive God? ...
> How can this be? ... Deity is a philosophical
> concept which savages are incapable of framing.[1]
>
> Emil Ludwig

In this chapter we shall attempt to disclose how the African religion forms the unifying motif of that culture's patterns. We want to let the depths of the African historical consciousness and understanding surface because although the Africans still live their religion, it is a religion whose temporal or historical origins seem to have been forgotten. Africans are convinced that their religious sentiment emerged with the earliest manifestations of human life on the African continent. We have traced above how the Africans have a whollistic view of life. It is no wonder then that religion enters into and sustains every aspect of their living. For the Africans, man is through and through a religious being, and it is religion that gives to them the basic grounding of their existential truths and reality.

We have considered in the preceding chapter how the earth, the sea, the sun, or the sky, and the wind are gods in the African cultural understanding. Now, usually when a person kneels in worship before any of these gods, he prays thus:

> If I do evil, the Earth sees me, the sun (sky) sees me
> If I do good, the Earth sees me, the sun (sky) sees me
> The good and well being of every man pleases me.
> The good and well being of every woman pleases me.

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[1] Idowu, Bolanji E., Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1969), p. 10.

> I do not know what can destroy the life of either man
> or woman.
> I do not know what can destroy the life of either
> adult or infant.
> Earth! You are my witness
> Sun (sky)! You are my witness.[2]

Such is the formula by which an African worshipper introduces himself to his god before he feels himself worthy of subsequently making requests of the god. It is a formula that has been handed down orally all through the ages. The Africans hold on to it, as a preparatory prayer that is written in the heart of every one.

Let us now make some key observations concerning this formula. First of all, we see in it the African's religious mental attitude toward all people. He excludes neither man nor woman, neither the adult nor infant from his heart's love for all. Secondly, he rejoices at the good and well-being of all. Thirdly, he calls on the Earth-god and sky-god to attest to the sincerity of his habitual religious dispositions. Fourthly, we see here that the Earth and the Sky are strongly believed by the Africans to be not only gods among other gods, but also the EVER WATCHING EYES of the King God. From these encompassing eyes of God no person can escape notice as he performs either good or evil acts. Our human life is lived within the enclosure of the Earth and the Sky. By keeping a strong tie with these servant gods, the African is assured of his good relation with the King God. Fifthly, as we pointed out earlier, the Earth, because

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[2] Taken from my personal recollection.

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of her special endowment of fertility, is the Supreme and archetypal mother. She cares and mothers all men. It becomes logical to the Africans that to hurt anyone is to offend the goddess Earth herself. Edmund Ilogu has put it well when he writes:

> The earth goddess ... is the guardian of morality, the controller of the minor gods of fortune and economic life. ... It is she who works with the spirits of dead ancestors to order the prohibitions and the ritual avoidances. Many social offences become 'aru' or pollution or abominations because they infringe the laws of the earth goddess. ... Most public worship of various communities are offered to the earth goddess as well as seasonal celebrations which relate to the various seasons of the year. Her shrine is found in most homes and public squares of the villages.[3]

All this explains why one hears a person whom he threatens physically reminding him, 'Welu Ani na Igwe solum,' i.e., "At least for the sake of the Sky and the Earth, refrain from doing me any harm."

We should like to add here that it is clear from the above introductory prayer that the worshipper does not know what can take away another human person's life. What does knowledge constitute in for the African? For the petitioner surely knows that a knife, a sword or a spear can take away life. Moreover, it is not likely that he is ignorant of certain herbs which are poisonous to the life of man. For the African, then, knowledge in the true sense involves only that knowledge of a thing which pertains to its productive use, that is to say, its capacity for doing good to self and others. The other aspect in which he knows a thing, as a possible instrument for doing harm to others, is what we may call a 'negative-knowledge.' For the African knowledge is the knowledge of truth, of reality, and of the meanings they constitute. The typical African saying is that truth is that by which man lives authentically as man. It was in the same vein that Socrates could not understand a man of knowledge who cannot live a virtuous life.

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[3] Ilogu, Edmund, Christianity and Ibo Culture (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1974), p. 35.

From the foregoing we can understand the African culture as a strong bond of the community's Wehood, a framework in which you are already in me and I in you. It is an understanding whose solid foundation is constructed upon the omnipresence of the gods. It is a setting in which all the meanings by which it is sedimented reach and strike the inner-being of every member of the community. The outcome of this perspective is that in the community the people's life-style becomes that of loving-contests, in accordance with the dictates of their religion. For the Africans the understanding of lived life and religion are convertible terms. By the virtue of this understanding, each person in the community is respected and accepted for who he is, and must reciprocate by a similar understanding. To each and all, therefore, life becomes ever-meaningful, a thing that each person interiorizes. This attitude introduces in the individual a certain inner personal consciousness of his worth and the high value that the community at large places in him. So he makes every effort to capture and actualize the potentiality that essentially constitutes his being, and that has been evoked in him by immersion in religious consciousness. It is in this sense that Eliade has written:

> What does living mean for a man who belongs to a traditional culture? Above all, it means living in accordance with extrahuman models, in conformity with archetypes. Hence it means living at the heart of the real since ... there is nothing truly real except the archetypes. Living in conformity with the archetypes amounted to respecting the "law," since the law was only a primordial hierophany, the revelation *in illo tempore* of the norms of existence, a disclosure by a divinity or a mystical being.[4]

It becomes a question of covert, spiritual competitions among all, that each person so struggles in living that he may be more useful and more rightly valued by his community. As a result of the African religion, no one in the community is treated with unconcernment; rather it is with well-grounded involvement that others view him and are always ready to respond to his needs whether in times of joy or of sorrow. Hence the traditional saying is, "madu ka madu ibe ya ji adi," that is to say, "it is by the life of others meeting and communing with the life of any one man that this person lives a true human life." That is why for Eliade, "... the man of the archaic civilizations can be proud of his mode of existence, which allows him to be free and to create."[5] It is important to stress here that this historically structured religious understanding of the Africans constitutes the Africans' universal language. This common understanding is the result of a unified synthesis of the voices of Being, God or Transcendence, of the servant gods, of spirits of the dead ancestors and of all beings whether organic or inorganic. As we pointed out earlier, this shared "language" provokes in the Africans a common attitude with regard to their practical existential meanings. Thus, although we may observe with anthropologists that the whole continent of Africa is infested with varied tongues and dialects, nonetheless we cannot agree with them that the Africans have not built the 'Tower of Babel.' For they have the same mental attitude toward life generated by that universal language and by the living out of the values of life which are communicated in it. This understanding which emerges from life enhances life and yet is achieved only through the process of living.

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[4] Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, *op*. *cit*., p .95.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 157.

As an illustration of the impact of religious consciousness on African self-understanding, let us consider the role of the Sun-god and its symbolism to the Africans in order to clarify how African historical consciousness and understanding originated and is daily confirmed. We noted above how the Africans identify the sacred with the intrinsic power of production. To the Africans darkness is not a thing to be desired in itself, but to be accepted as a necessity so that the busy sun may take a rest. At the rising of the sun, darkness gets expelled and a new day is born. In this way the rising of the sun comes to symbolize the birth of a new child. There is a traditional ritual attached to this notion. It is a rich ritual that surrounds the naming ceremony of the newborn child. It is performed before the sun god's shrine, usually erected at the center of each family compound. Usually on the twenty-eighth day of the child's birth, all the members of the large family compound or compounds assemble around the shrine. The oldest man, an elder and father of all the "Umunna," which means literally all the children of the one common known ancestor, sits on the family's traditional sacred stool now placed directly in front of the shrine. Now, the child is handed over to him. He stands it on his lap. He dances it and gives it a name. He then invokes the sun god, the earth god and other gods in the following lyric manner, which communicates a kind of geneology of the gods.

> Anyanu Ezechitaoke, no obu oji no obu manya,
> Ani ugwu na odele, no obu oji no obu manya,
> Ohumili na oma mbala, no obu oji no obu manya,
> Ikuku ukwu na nta, no obu oji no obu manya,
> Igwe na oha, no obu oji no obu manya,
> Chineke Onye nwe ndu, no obu oji no bu manya.
>
> O Sun, you servant of the King Author of all being
> It is to you kola and wine,
> O Earth, you of Hills and Valleys, it is to you
> kola and wine
> O Sea and the deeps, it is to you kola and wine
> O Wind, big and small, it is to you kola and wine,
> O Sky and all beings, it is to you kola and wine,
> O King Creator, the owner of all existence,
> It is to you kola and wine.

After each invocation, he places a piece of kola nut and pours a libation of wine from the sacred traditional horn on the sun's shrine.

We should pause here and take note of the significance of this ontologizing ritual, for it is in this type of phenomenon that we may observe the momentousness of the African oral script. The sense of the hierarchical ordering of the elements of the universe, represented in hierarchical linkage of servant gods to the Chiukwu (the One of Plotinus and Augustine), is here articulately imparted to the assembly. That sense comes to inhere in the African's being as a result of the frequency of this ritual ceremony. Births of children are, after all, of very frequent occurrence among the communities of the nation. In this manner the existential sense of the unity of beings is imparted to the African. Secondly, we would like to observe that in this ritual the child's "weight" and value to be associated with his existence are basically grounded. The ground from which the child comes to be is thus venerated as a primary efficient cause. It is here that we see the depth of the Africans' notion of man: the child is respected because his new presence testifies to the richness and fecundity of his primordial source.

And the ritual lyric continues. The elder goes on to trace the child's ancestral lineage. A litany of these ancestors' names is recited. He invokes them one after another. The old man is assisted here by others lest his memory become confused and he name one ancestor before or after his rightful place in the geneological series. He does not dare omit any one of them for each of these ancestors has held and perpetuated the family's history. There is a link between each ancestor and the new child. The place the ancestor fills in the line is both historical and causal, because without this continuity the new child could not become a member of the family. The new child was intentionally anticipated by each ancestor, so that in this African ritual we have history itself personified, venerated and celebrated. If we take a further look at the assembly, we see that it is composed of four sets. Its historical present is made up of all the children, men and women, of the family's compounds. The elder is the very factual link between that present and their pasts, those ancestor-gods now being severally invoked and libationally worshipped. Finally, the newly-born child represents the family's future now actualized in the present. These ceremonies have always communicated this strongly historical understanding in traditional Africa, and indeed even today in most parts of that continent.

We note here that not only is history re-enacted by this ritual but also the actuality of this child's geneology establishes a renewed and more deeply ingrained understanding among the family members. For at the mention of the name of one or another of the ancestors everyone in the assembly is awakened to a consciousness of his or her blood links with the new child. By this blood link everyone belongs to the child and the child belongs to him or her. This understanding generates love among all, a factor which is the key to the African kinship structure. It is a structure which derives its strength from its religious basis.

But this understanding does not stop at the limits of the immediate family. It goes on and links up a whole village composed of several other compounds and even reaches further to connect several villages which make up a town. This understanding binds several towns together and makes a family of a whole clan and so forth unto a whole tribe. Being an historical understanding, it becomes the very background of all African traditional social life and thus forms a historically operative consciousness of the African people, a consciousness in which history is ever at work. The very essence of that understanding lies in its intrinsic power of giving the Africans their human horizon in which all participate in the stream of their tradition. This is the horizon of which Julius Nyerere of Tanzania speaks.

> The foundation, and the objective, of the African socialism is the extended family. The true African socialist does not look on one class of men as his brethren and others as his natural enemies. He does not form an alliance with the 'brethren' for the extermination of the 'non-brethren.' He rather regards all men as his brethren, as members of his ever extending family.[6]

Thus we see clearly from this text and from the above how Africa's notion of the universe as a dynamic functional whole is transferred to human relations.

To the Africans, history itself is sacred because of its productivity. They extend to history the same reverence which they give to the fertility of the earth. History has produced and bequeathed a legacy of meanings by which the people live together and conduct themselves. These meanings are transcendental and are held with awe and reverence. They have a note of ontological time-less-ness about them. In this vein, Eliade has observed:

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[6] Nyere, Julius, Ujamaa, Essays on Socialism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 11-12. Emphasis is ours.

> ... for 'primitives' as for the man of all pre-modern societies, the sacred is equivalent to a power, and in the last analysis, to reality. The sacred is saturated with being. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacity.[7]

The authors of these meanings had the profound intention that they be understood and lived by all. These authors are none others than the great dead ancestors, the heroes of that culture. Africans see themselves always and essentially as "ants on the shoulders of those who went before them."

For this reason it is significant that we discuss the active cultural roles of these ancestors. They are gods. They are spirits. John Mbiti, an African theologian, emphasizes repeatedly that the spiritual universe is a unit with the physical. He notes strongly that the two so intermingle and so much dovetail into each other that it is not easy, or even necessary, to draw a distinction or attempt to separate them. For him, and he is right, the spiritual world plays an important role in African life. He recognizes two main categories of spiritual beings, namely, those which were created as such, and those which were once humans. He further states that spiritual beings "can also be subdivided into divinities, associates of God, ordinary spirits and the living-dead."[8]

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[7] Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit., p. 12.

Our main interest in this consideration centers on the living-dead whom Edmund Ilogu, another African theologian, prefers to call "the dead ancestors, the invisible members of the community."[9] As G.W.F. Hegel once wrote, "... even the spirit of the departed is in the life-blood of his relative, is present in the self of the family."[10] For the Africans, these invisible members of the community are the immediate and closest link that they have with the spirit world. These ancestor-gods are now the special friends and emissaries of the King God. They commune with Him. For while they were yet alive as pure humans, they lived a virtuous life by obeying the laws of the land, the dictates and prohibitions of the earth god. Especially as the elders of the community, they were the exemplar guardians of law and order and ruled all with love. All through the line of history they were the founders of the culture's institutions, and had a special concern for the upholding of the norms of that culture. They now share in the omniscience and omnipresence of the King God. They are everywhere in that invisible, permeating and enveloping cosmos which we have described in the last chapter. With their greater powers now that they are gods, they protect and bless their living ones all the more effectively. They also have the power to punish evil doers with some affliction or illness. Their presence is felt by all. African historical consciousness and understanding defy adequate analysis and full explication. But we need not be dismayed since the Heideggerian notion of the hermeneutical circle is spelled out in the actual practical daily living of the Africans, because the three moments or ecstasies of history simultaneously operate in the African culture.

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[8] Mbiti, John S., African Religious and Philosophy (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1970), pp. 96-105.

[9] Ilogu, *op*. *cit*., p. 36.

[10] Hegel, *op*. *cit*., p. 511.

It is important to note that there is no aspect of the African life activities from which these ancestor gods can be excluded. Whether in eating and drinking, whether in marriage or births, whether in joyous feasts or sorrows, in struggle or future desires, these ancestor spirits are felt as present and concerned. They are invoked in prayer and sacrifices are performed to them to avert the possible incursions of the evil spirits or to cause some good fortunes to the community and its members. Thus Africans have a special faith in these ancestor spirits. As a matter of fact, even death itself is accepted because it assures one of a happy return to the community of these loved spirits.

Speaking further of these living-dead, Mbiti asserts:

> They return to their human families from time to time, and share meals with them, however symbolically. They know and have interest in what is going on in the family ... they inquire about family affairs, and may even warn of impending danger or rebuke those who have failed to follow their special instructions. They are the guardians of family affairs, traditions,

> ethics and activities. Offence in these matters is usually ultimately an offence against the forefathers who, in their capacity, act as the invisible police of the families and communities. Because they are still "people," the living-dead are therefore the best intermediaries between men and God; they know the needs of men, they have "recently" been here with men, and at the same time they have full access to the channels communicating with God directly or, according to some societies, indirectly through their own forefathers.[11]

In Africa this religious historical consciousness and understanding is so strong that some societies, such as in West Africa, have an immemorial tradition whereby these ancestors must 'return' in all their numbers from the earliest to the most recently dead. During such a period of return they make a special stay with their living ones. It is a cultural phenomenon that occurs every third year and lasts for an entire year. This year is a year of joy and festivities. The ancestors dwell in their sacred groves, the archetypes of the invisible cosmos. Each village has its own such grove.

The return takes a special order and form. Starting from the most senior of the villages the return of these ancestors takes place every fourth day. Their arrival is always at midnight and is announced with a sudden outburst of their mystifying music resonating from the grove. All the living members of the village give out shouts of a welcoming joy. Animals are slaughtered and a great feast is made during the entire ensuing day. Moreover, other villages are invited to share in the festivities. The mysterious music

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[11] Mbiti, op. cit., p. 185.

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is continuous and the initiates, men only, bring the sacrificial wines and kola nuts to their ancestors. On this Holy Day all sorrows and quarrels are banished from the hearts of the people. A special revitalization comes to each person's life. Correct mental attitude and good will toward all are confirmed. Life meets life with a special flavor and energy. Thus we have the beginning of the general atmosphere that prevails in the town throughout the year.

These ancestors do not remain in the grove all the times of the year. Very frequently they come out in the form of masks and masquerade in the compounds, villages and the town. Some of them perform the ritualistic blessings of the town; some exorcise the evil spirits from all nooks and corners; some go through the town with large crowds of people following and attentively listening to their moral instructions in a variety of poetic forms:

> Nnweta di mma, obu ihe anyi ji agozi unu
> O si ngi enwetana, ogbenye ju ya onu, okwu anyi okwue
> Olili di mma, obu ihe anyi ji agozi unu
> O na eli si gi elina, olili ya bulu nsi, okwu anyi ekwue.
>
> To have possessions is a good, it is by it that we bless you.
> Whoever wills that you possess not, our word stands (against him).
> To eat is a good, it is by it that we bless you.
> Whoever eats but wills that you eat not, our word stands (against him).
>
> Umu ka anyi cholu, obu ihe unu ji nochitenwue anyi
> O sili umu adina nobodo, si bupu ya na nkpu
> Ani obodo jihu oyi dede dede, nya ka anyi ji nakwute unu
> O na akpusa obodo, oku okwu na uka lewa ya obi.
>
> It is children we want, it is by them that you fully represent us.

> Whoever wills no children in the town, let his corpse
> be thrown into the Bad Bush.
> Let there be perfect peace in the town, that is why we
> make this return to you.
> Whoever brings dissentions in the town, let the fire of
> unpeace burn up his heart.

Let us observe that this 'triennial' cultural practice, besides being a deeply religious phenomenon among the Africans, introduces a certain pyramidic formal notion of human history in the minds of the people. Thus it is a formal cause which conditions and disposes every person to a personal involvement and active participation in the enactment of history. This unique form of enacting history is Africa's special mode of transcending. It is a recessional attempt, as it were, to catch hold of the beginning. It is at the same time a projectional activity by which that very primordial beginning is aimed at as the ultimate man's existential future. Moreover, this enactment of history is a cyclical phenomenon. It gives us the Africans' fundamental definition of man situated in his spatio-temporal existence in the world. Here, once again, Eliade's remarks are pertinent.

> ... all religious acts are held to have been founded by gods, civilizing heroes, or mythical ancestors. ... among primitives, not only do rituals have their mythical model but any human act whatever acquired effectiveness to the extent to which it exactly "repeats" an act performed at the beginning of time by a god, a hero, or an ancestor. ... Man only repeats the act of the Creation; his religious calender commemorates, in the space of a year, all the cosmogonic phases which took place _ab_ _origine_. ... Man is contemporary with the cosmogony and with the anthropology because ritual projects him into the mythical epoch of the beginning.[12]

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[12] Eliade, _The Myth of the Eternal Return_, _op_. _cit_., p. 22.

As an established historical understanding, we have in it the ever-renewing of the Wehood life-style of the African culture. It is a wehood that has a "logotherapeutic" effect in the African. Each one sees the meaningfulness of his human existence. He sees himself in the mirror of the value that his community places upon him, and hence he appreciates his worth. This gives us the basic explanation of why the Africans do not normally suffer from neurosis. By the force of this understanding the Africans accept their cares, anxieties, sufferings and struggles, life's guilts, their births and deaths, as intrinsic to living itself, and they share these life situations with one another. Deviations from the resonances and the reverberations of this Wehood are a rarity. Understanding of its very nature generates love and that is why we said earlier that the traditional African culture is a field in which the people display the activities of authentic love-contests.

From the foregoing, it is legitimate for us to conclude that historical consciousness, understanding, the Wehood, are for the Africans convertible terms and notions. They have a deep religious significance within African culture. They give us the immanent intentionality and the primary motivational force in traditional African behavioral patterns.

Two of such patterns deserve our observation. Firstly, all through the continent of Africa polygamy is a well-known cultural practice. How did it originate? What was the causal idea behind it? We must remember that each village's ancestral grove has a shrine within it. Sacrifices and rituals are performed at these shrines. Each village has thus a priestly family, their levites, whose exclusive role is to make sacrifices for the people whether private or public. Every levitical family is therefore an historical necessity in each village. Now, the most elderly person of that family is ipso facto the officiating priest of the village. If by any mishappenings he is now also the only living male member of that family and he is now getting very old and if his wife continues to have only female children, then the whole village becomes alerted. Out of religious necessity another wife is procured for him by the village in the hope that a male child might be born to replace him. Thus polygamy was initially a religious exigency in Africa.

To this we must next observe that most African polygamous families came to be because of the necessity of perpetuating the family's history by raising male issue. John Mbiti writes:

> This concept of personal immortality should help us to understand the religious significance of marriage in African societies. Unless a person has close relatives to remember him when he has physically died, then he is no body and simply vanishes out of human existence like a flame when it is extinguished. Therefore it is a duty, religious and ontological, for every one to get married; and if a man has no children or only daughters, he finds another wife so that through her, children (or sons) may be born who would survive him and keep him (with the other living-dead of the family) in personal immortality. Procreation

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> is the absolute way of insuring that a person is not cut off from personal immortality.[13]

Secondly, some African societies have such a deep religious historical consciousness that Truth Itself is a god who is daily venerated. For the Africans truth is that by which man authentically lives as man. We pointed out before that because truth plays such an important social role it is personified and deified. In the Igbo land of West Africa, Ofo is the symbolic name by which Truth as a god is designated. This god is aesthetically depicted by the artistic tying together of a number of the branches of an Ofo tree, usually in a miniature form. Each family elder is known as the "Holder-of-Ofo." This god not only symbolizes the reality of transcendent truth to the Africans, but by its very presence in each family it testifies to the whole village and town that such a family has, through all history, lived and respected truth. Once again, a male issue becomes a necessity for every family at every given period of time. This Ofo, this Truth, must have a priest who also must be a son of the very family. It is worthy of our notice that the fact of Ofo gives us another African mode of transcending and indicates a highly developed power of mental abstraction. Ofo is a god who is feared and at the same time very interiorized by everyone because he represents all the truths by which the family has traditionally lived throughout immemorable ages. Ofo symbolically is as eternal as Chiukwu Himself.

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[13] Mbiti, op. cit., p. 33.

Once again, therefore, we see that polygamy arises by the fact of Ofo.

Finally, let us note that traditional African names of persons are of deep religious significance. Edmund Ilogu gives us the names that affirm the reality of God through His beneficent actions to man.

> Chukwueloka (Osaeloka) Gods' thoughts are very deep. Chukwujioke (Chijioke, chinwe) God is the divider, he has the portions and he of his own will gives to each person as he thinks fit. Chukwuemeka (Nnaemeka) God (or our father in Heaven) has done great things (in giving the family the son so named). Ogo Chukwu, God's mercy and benevolence is made concrete (through the child that bears the name). Okwuolisa (Okwosa, Olisa) The word of God is Unalterable.[14]

Here again we note that the Africans have such a profound sense of human existential transcending and of the ontological origin of man that their very names are a constant reminder of and cipher-scripts for the transcendence. That is why we asserted earlier that religion is to the Africans the fiber-thread of their cultural meaningful living. This blends with our earlier statements in the preceding chapter that the fact of existence in the first instance is the source of wonder that initially impulsated African thinking and that the notion of the super-human power of God was begotten by the Africans' questioning of the chief existents, the four chief elements of the universe. Existence still remains a puzzle to the Africans so that they approach it by recognizing with gratitude, an historical religious act,

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[14] Ilogu, op. cit., Appendix 11, p. 16.

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its fact and its givenness. Africans live existence rather than indulge in futile mental speculation about it. Such speculations in the end leave one where one started. It is a mystery to be identified but not defined. It demands like all mysteries a certain openness of the mind to be accepted for what it is. Africans, however, through the symbolism of their works of art, try to capture and anchor more concretely, so to speak, the primordial sources of existence. We will therefore examine these art-works in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE INSTITUTION OF ART IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Our concern in this chapter is not with the history of African art-works. Our focus is rather on the dynamic, enduring historical message which they embody and therefore also upon the role they play in the African culture. In other words, we want to show how they are at once both the carriers and grounding forces of that culture. We do however recognize a certain difficulty here. It is the question of the special intrinsic relationship between the African works of art and their content. For while we do not aim at discussing their very form directly, nonetheless we are compelled to do so indirectly because it is only in the abstract nature of the African art-works that the African creators express their 'genius' and the viewers or experiencers capture the message or the meanings which they communicate. In other words, the very essence of African art-works lies in their abstract forms, which have the power of reverberating and resonating the culture's differentiating ideas, meanings, realities and values. The more abstract in form are these art-works, the more they stimulate in the African viewers an authentic dialectical encounter with them. It is only in that way that through them (these works of art) the self-understanding of the great spirits of the past is historically mediated to the African peoples. As a result of this particular form the work of art is viewed by the Africans not as static but as a dynamic thing. In this way, it has its authentic being in the fact that, in becoming experienced it transforms its African experiencers while itself remaining the thing or the subject which endures through time. Our main aim in this chapter however is to show that art transforms the African by making him adopt his traditional cultural heritage in which he realizes his authentic personal selfhood among the others of his community. Nonetheless, a certain question here suggests itself. For, while we are not concerned with the very structure or the form of the forms of African art, we must clarify why it is that African artistic expression has always assumed an abstract form. This is a metaphysical question of maximum ontological import. We will take it up below since the answer will bring to the surface the core role of art in the African culture.

With regard to its very chronological-historical origin, African art, like African religion, can be said to be contemporaneous with the coming-to-be of man into existence on that continent. Professor Labelle Prussin observes:

> The arts, in fact, are a part of African life in all its manifestations; individual pieces of art are not separated out; they are not placed in museums, they are not assessed for monetary value based on age, place of origin, and artist. They are instead an essential part of every day environment.[1]

This everyday African environment is an historically transmitted one. The term "environmental arts," as Prussin uses it in the context of the African culture, testifies to her precise grasp of the intimate link between art and living culture. For by that term, she refers to the African's personal environment, his life-world, which begins with his very skin and with the body itself. It moves on to include the masking, clothing, and costuming traditions, that is, anything that modifies or transforms the body's environment (e.g., dance, staged movements that are part of the ritual or behavioral process), household goods, and interior modifications of the environment; then the immediate space surrounding the body, and finally, the African's structuring and the extension of that space into a coherently ordered universe. Since every human is ultimately a symbolizing being, our purpose here is not to detect cultural invariants but to reveal particular cultural variants characteristic of Africa. Therefore, our aim is to show forth its inner uniqueness in that its exotic symbolism is transcendental, that is, archetypal to the Africans. Each African art-work carries with it a cluster of traditional meanings that hang together and form a functional point of reference for all in the community. Writing on the nature of the symbolism of art, Dr. Prussin has this specification to make about the African art:

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[1] Prussin, Labelle, Environmental Arts of West Africa; Research News, Division of Research, Development and Administration (Lansing: University of Michigan, May 1975), Volume XXXV, No. 11, p. 3.

> In African societies, an object can internalize powers that do not merely dictate behavior, but may actually cause it. Without such powers a work of art is useless. So rituals are performed over man-made objects, from a delicately hand-carved spoon to a large granary, imbuing them with a life of their own. This all results in a symbolism that is far more intense,

> living, active than the symbolism found in most Western art.[2]

She cites the example of photographing, the act of which is viewed in many African countries as an act of interaction between the subject and its image. The resultant photograph represents the capture of a person's soul and cannot be abstracted into a mere aesthetic representation. She makes another beautiful illustration from the experience of art collectors. When a piece of sculpture is purchased, certain parts which to the collectors are only decorative are removed by the African custodians prior to the actual transaction. Thus are thereby removed the really critical, meaningful and symbolic elements of the piece of art. It becomes therefore desacralized before it passes into the hands of a stranger.

Since art enters into and belongs in the most original sense to the very fibre of the culture, it becomes clear why it is that all over that continent art-works form the commonest of all sceneries. They are a universal language of the people. What then, one may wish to ask, is the leading idea or the image of life that the African artistry attempts to capture and, as it were, to concretize into the on-going experienced life-world of the people? As Prussin observes:

> The unity of the African art results from the pervasive and fundamental belief in the cycle of life, in continued existence after death and from the

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

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> resultant overwhelming importance of increase and fertility. Quite naturally, along with this belief comes the necessity of protection: if life is revered it must be protected. The high value placed on procreation, nourishment, and protection is dominant and results in a oneness with the earth and with nature. ... The theme of fertility, [which] is of the utmost personal and cultural significance is expressed in forms ranging from cicatrization to architecture, from clothing to the very layout of a living compound. It enriches the dances; it provides substance for the songs.[3]

We may recall that in Chapter V of this work, we considered the African's conception of the universe. We saw that while for the Africans all the elements form a functional, organic whole, the Earth is the Supreme element on account of her special endowment with the intrinsic power of fertility. The fact of existence still remains the greatest source of wonder to the Africans. It cannot be questioned directly by the African mind so as to disclose its mysterious nature with any exact comprehension which might produce a precise verbal articulation. Hence fertility which is experienced as the proximal channel of the existence of all the existents of this universe including man himself becomes, as it were, the central theme of the inquiring African mind and expresses the existential link with Being Itself, the source and ground of beings. For the Africans, without a perpetually active consciousness of this link man's life fades into sheer void. It is within the phenomenon of the awareness of this link that the Africans contain their joys and afflictions, birth, growth and death, hopes and anxieties, concerns, cares amidst the live love-contests of the African original culture.

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The African mind expresses the theme of fertility in artistic rather than in some verbal philosophic form, in an effort to approximate existence itself which comes forth experientially through fertility. Thus, fertility is the key image according to which the African arts are assembled. It unifies the peoples of Africa. Dr. Prussin has observed that within that unity, one of the most impressive qualities of African art is that it offers a highly diverse repertoire based on a single theme, for the individual expressions of this theme are as multitudinous as its range is vast. Fertility is associated with strength and vitality; it is deified as the goddess of increase and of life's security, of nourishment and growth. All ideas of motherhood, of femininity, all female attributes, all acts surrounding procreation, care and the upbringing of offspring, whether humans, plants or grain, are associated with fertility. Of course, Fertility by its very essence implies male activities especially in the phenomena of procreation and protection. The Earth itself, which is the archetype of all motherhood and of fertility, as we saw earlier, is viewed by the Africans as constitutively an embodiment of the male and the female in an inseparable oneness. In other words, the earth is a mysterious synthesis of masculinity and femininity.

The results of these associations of all life's di-

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mensions with fertility are the African artistic structures manifesting the variations of the omnipresence of fertility. These structures conjure up in the Africans a reverential awe for life or existence itself. These associations give us at once the universal myth and the cultural values of the African peoples. They cause gates, doors, walls, and their surrounding areas to become works of art which are beautifully carved, painted or sculpted with complex architectural designs at the basis of their construction. A more obvious symbol of fertility is the use of an ostrich egg in various environmental contexts, but especially among the nomadic peoples of Africa. An ostrich egg, often intricately decorated, is hung over the head of the bed or suspended from one of the bedposts so as to drive home to the minds and hearts of all who enter the room the transcendental message of the symbolism of fertility.

In this regard, Dr. Prussin notes: "as a natural outgrowth of the values placed on fertility the union of male and female is exulted and represented consistently in a wide range of environmental contexts."[4] The figurines carefully carved on gates and doors as well as the designs of doorlocks symbolize this union. Doors, entrances, and other openings in buildings are artistically assembled so as to symbolize the opening for conception and birth.

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[4] Ibid., p. 10.

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Frequently these doors are flanked by the ancestral pillars to represent the role of the male in the dynamic functionality of the fertile femininity. The pillars also symbolize the protective role of the male in preservation of that which is brought into existence by female fertility.

This brings us to a consideration of art as the conserver and carrier of the African historical consciousness and understanding. In its multifaceted roles, fertility is all at once and wholistically seen as the significant cause of the past without which the present is not and could not have been, and of the future experientially assured by the same immanence and enduring benignity of fertility. By reason of this immanence of fertility in her perduring permissiveness and availability, the three moments of history, the past, the present and the future, all operate concurrently in the living consciousness of the Africans. The past could not have come about without the primordial fertility. Moreover, it is only because the past acquired the elasticity of fertility that it could beget the present. In the same very stream and functional chain of fertility the future promises a certainty of infinite possibilities. Thus African arts aim at capturing and symbolizing the images of life within the realms of the past and present potencies now actualized, which will in turn combine to generate the 'not-yets' of the future. This historical consciousness indicates the prophetic nature of the African arts. These works of art give the

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people their hopes and courage to live life through in a context of meaning which has been handed down to them. In Africa the categorization of art for art's sake is meaningless. According to the Africans, the aesthetic is not a value by itself. Any piece of art-work must speak to and arouse in the people their capacity not only for delight but also for wonder and appreciation of the mystery surrounding their lives, or else it remains valueless and irrelevant. In other words, it must be a moving piece of work so as to transmit the cultural overpowering reality that has been transfused into its form. That reality is the way things have been, are, and by projection will be in the future. Thus, a work of art intends what is historically meant within its cultural horizon. What is meant, of course, is the truth of being which in the African context is mediated through fertility. From this consideration of fertility as the single and universal motif underlying all African artistry, it follows that art is especially educational for the Africans. Through the event of encountering art-works, the young person is initiated into the culture's themes, meanings and ideals, and the adult individual finds cultural confirmation on his insertion within the culture. That is why we said earlier that African arts are transcendental. They move beyond their mere form, and become archetypal intendings which serve to situate the people within their culture's meanings, realities and values.

But no one has ever seen existence itself "walking out there in space" nor its midwife, fertility, as it functions in time. But the Africans do experience the facticity of these entities. However, they cannot be adequately captured and concretized, as it were, in mere verbal images and forms. This explains why African art is generically abstract in form. The varied species or 'factual' images of fertility in her diversified operations cannot but be expressed in abstract artistic forms. In this artistry, the power, wealth and beauty of the richest and most fertile aspect of the human mind, the imagination itself, achieves its most articulate disclosure. As the faculty of the possible, the imagination thus communes with its like, the abstract images of possible existence through fertility. By these forms, the distant which is at the same time mysteriously the near, namely, Being itself which discloses itself through the existence of the existents and which in turn shows forth through fertility and which in its own turn gets articulated by these art forms, is brought to conscious living awareness. Thus, the African works of art bring home to the people the abiding message of that encompassing transcendence which Being is. And precisely because of that message, the Africans get well rooted in and existentially at-one-ment with their beinghood. For it is a message that points to the assured ground of man's 'being-in-the-world' which manifests itself only situationally in time and space. This insight anchors the Africans'

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conscious acceptance of their lives despite the strains of finiteness and transitoriness as well as the fleeting character of the things of this universe which surround that life.

This brings us to an examination of the actual dialectical encounter of the Africans with their works of art. A question may legitimately be posed here: how is the experiencing of art-works communicable from person to person in the community? We can, of course, assert that this question in itself savors of a kind of circularity. For the community and art are inseparable. They are of such a complementary nature that without the one, the other is not. After all, we have seen fertility as the central theme, the principal idea, the primordial archetype from which all of the African symbolization of art-works radiates. Moreover, each symbolic variation assumes the state of an archetype within the encompassing 'whole' of all the culture's meanings and realities. In short, give the Africans their culture's 'arts' and they at once have all of their mineral world, vegetable world, animal world, human world, and divine world, if we consider world in a fashion analogous to the "apocalyptical world of the Bible" whose similar categories are united in identity by the conception-"Christ."[5] With fertility as the leading idea in the African artistry, all these worlds get so intertwined that in

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[5] Frye, Northrop, Anatomy of Criticism (Four Essays), third essay, "Theory of Archetypal Meaning (1)" (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 141.

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any art-work symbolizing one of them all the others are implicitly contained. As we saw earlier, it was through a meditation on fertility that the Africans arrived at a cosmogony that gave birth to their religion by which they, as men, commune with the society of gods in their hierarchical ascending order. In that hierarchy the gods of the mineral, vegetable, animal and human worlds are proximate and existentially prominent. But these gods are servant gods of the Supreme, Omnipotent, King-God who ultimately conserves and protects all that perdures in empirical existence. Furthermore, fertility determines the cycle of the seasons, the times to sow and to let the seeds decay and die that they may come back anew in the harvests to be gathered and stored up in their own appropriate season. As with seeds so also with humans. Reincarnation is a strong belief among the African peoples. All these phenomena are carefully and abundantly depicted in the artistic complexity of the African cult community. That is why the writing of Karl Jaspers in this regard is appealing to us:

> The world of a cult is a premise of the art of transcendent visions. It pre-supposes a community of practicing believers, and thus a dependence of the artist's own vision; its depth is due precisely to the fact that the individual rests not on himself alone, that he expresses things he knows jointly with all others.[6]

Thus our early question in the above paragraph is answered, but only partially. To rephrase the question, we ask how the individual person in the African community encounters inwardly all these works of art around him and how he communicates to the others of his community the truth value of their message. Now, a work of art is not a mere pleasure object. Being historical as we have shown above, it is viewed not as a static but a dynamic thing. But history is a flowing phenomenon in that each generation has to re-enact it in such wise that the past meanings embodied in the works of art achieve cumulative density in the present. This thickening or growth of cultural meanings is possible because art-works are inspirational. They reveal to the individual person broader insights, more depths and the richer values of the culture's already operative meanings. As true works of art they signal and symbolize the infinite possibilities of human ways of existing in the world of space and time. That is why a mere aesthetic appreciation, or pleasurable viewing of art is not regarded by the Africans as a goal that may be pursued for its own sake. It does not provoke involvement or commitment in the viewer, as Karl Jaspers indicates.

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[6] Jaspers, Philosophy, Vol. 3 (Metaphysics), op. cit., p. 172.

> Truth ceases only when all seriousness becomes impossible, when I esthetically enjoy strange things at random, things that are never to enter the realm of my own possibilities, that are destined only to serve my curiosity, my desire for variety, and the rise of emotions that will never be my own. It is then that the reality of existence and Existenz is veiled by existentially depleted pictures from artistic languages, that nothing of the essence is seen anymore.[7]

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

In short, purely aesthetic appreciation of works of art detaches them from the spiritual-moral basis of life and thereby induces a spectator mentality.

But the African is inwardly, personally involved in his cultural art-works, because both he and art belong together primiparously in fertility. They both were formerly undifferentiated like the drops of water in a cistern, in such a fashion that neither the one nor the other could assume the category of the subject to which the other might be the object. But when it came about, as it were, that they were 'born' into actual empirical existence in time, it became possible for the finite mind of man to make the mental dichotomy of the two into the subject-object categories. Subsequently, the African makes an effort to transcend that dichotomy in the process of viewing and encountering art products on the basis of that central African existential horizon and cultural archetype, the theme of fertility. Art is not seen as an object over against him; rather it is a light which directs him to recapture the primordial hierarchical origins of his being-hood. In this way, his focus is not on the very form itself of the art-piece, but on the message which fertility delivers through the myths of art-forms. The carved or sculpted image, for example, of the ancestral mother or father of the community which in its abstract form is not representational of any definite woman or man, continuously tells the African the stories of past events. As events leave behind them mes-

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sages and meanings, so the African captures and relives those values. Through this image, the feelings, emotions and the reverential awe for all motherhood and fatherhood are stirred up in the African and he communicates these feelings to the others of his community by acting them out in his daily living among them. Such images are usually communal as well as private ritual objects. Motherhood and fatherhood are sacred to the Africans. The respect, homage, and care which are shown to the aged and elders of the African community derive their enrichment from this cultural phenomenon.

"Art brings to mind the powers represented in ideas."[8] Far more than empirical reality and cogitative constructions are grasped through an authentic encounter with art. For Immanuel Kant an aesthetic idea is:

> ... that representations of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e., concept, being adequate to it and which language, consequently, can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible.[9]

It was precisely in the same vein that we pointed out earlier in the first part of this work that the African arts are a cipher-script of the people. It is through their mode of the reading of that cipher-script that the Africans ultimately approach their works of art. A cipher-script

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[8] Ibid., p. 170.

[9] Kant, Immanuel, The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment #49 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 528.

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begins where all intellectual cognitions and conceptions, all rational and logical constructs, all verbal languages which might be transcribed in alphabetic codes, founder and where the ultimate grounding realities remain all the same. As such, African arts could not but be abstract in form all through the ages since they aim at those realities. Johannes Pfeiffer observes:

> ... two things act together here; one, that such representations strive after something which lies beyond the bounds of experience; then, that it concerns inner intuition which precisely as such, remains incommensurable for the conceptual as well as for any direct expression generally. Accordingly, "genius" is the capacity to rise from something given in an Idea, and to express these Ideas in symbolic representation in such a way that the "subjective state of mind" corresponding to them communicates to others.[10]

Once again, one can see from both of the above citations the richness of the African abstract art form. Neither fertility nor motherhood as such has ever been seen by anyone. We saw earlier that the Mother Earth has been questioned by the African mind as to how she acquired her power of fertility and how the answer involved a spontaneous leap to the conclusion that a Supra-sensory power has endowed her with it. Thus in aiming at symbolizing *all* the varied aspects of fertility, the African artistry tries to reach fertility's primordial source. African art-works point to the realities of that other world which they at

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[10] Pfeiffer, Johannes, *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, Jasper's Interpretation of Art; the Library of Living Philosophers*, edited by Paul A. Schilppl (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1974), p. 706.

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the same time open up to our meditative gaze. In some areas of Africa, there are certain ritual masks that are so designed as to symbolize the Mother of the gods-"NneMa." We considered earlier the case of the god, 'Truth' itself from which all our existential truths emanate and how it is symbolized by an artistic device of tying together certain sacred numbers of the little branches of an Ofo-tree.

As cipher-scripts these art-works are to the Africans analogous to what the 'hand-book' of meditation is to the novices of a religious order. They point to that which reveals itself to man, namely, a Being with which man is already connected by reason of his origin. This special revelation of Being to man occurs at those exalted moments occasioned by art when an individual person becomes reflectively attentive once again to the stories so often told through an art-piece. He is thus inspired with a vision of Transcendence which is now available to him with a certain presence through the greater thickening of the former meanings already captured and incorporated into the cultural dynamics of the community. This newly acquired presence of God or Transcendence so illumines and permeates the entire person of the individual that he acquires thereby a higher participation in Being. The encompassing primal source opens up to him. That which ultimately was intended in art becomes realized as it were, but only momentarily so because Being or Transcendence has this game with man, namely, that in its appearing there is also a receding. The cipher-script must be read again and again, but each time something has been made to shine forth from the Suprasensory. Its presence transforms, uplifts, molds and liberates the individual, for while searching for the ultimate accountability of fertility through its symbols, the African has really been searching for the ultimate explanation for his own existence as well as that of others of his community. Every insight into this explanation makes for a more meaningful living. He thus acts and performs in conformity with the understanding and in that way communicates the message to others. "In so far as symbols are true for us, we live through them in the depth of transcendent reality, which is accessible in no other way."[11] It is in this phenomenon that we approximate the inexhaustible message of the African art. In other words, what is intended in art continues to be fulfilled in this pragmatic action which gives completion to the role of art in African society. It is especially in the aged men and women and particularly among the elders of the family compounds that this committed experiencing of art is evidenced. They are now the guardians of the cultural meanings left behind by the great ancestors through the medium of art-works. They have been long confirmed and habituated in the art of deciphering more meanings from the eternal symbols. They are now less distracted by the passions and practical preoccupations of life, so they have it as their inherited role to indulge in the meditative and metaphysical thinking in art, the surest mode of maintaining the line between the historic past and the eternal Now. Hence it is that the greatest and most satisfying greeting to an elderly person whom one meets on the road or anywhere else in the African village or town runs thus -- "Nna muoo!" or "Nne muoo!" which mean, "Father!" or "Mother! you have begotten us, beget more of us," i.e., more children. He or she usually responds, "I-i-i hi," i.e., "Amen," as his or her face brightens with joy. These old men and women have a certain routine of visiting, indiscriminately, each and all the family compounds of the locality, asking firstly about the well-being of the pregnant women, then of the children and then about the grown-ups. In this way they communicate to others the rich meaningfulness of life. They recognize the worth of everyone, a worth deriving from the common transcendental origin whose depths they regularly decipher from the art-symbols.

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[11] _Ibid._, p. 714.

From the above account it becomes evident that Africans' mode of encountering their works of art is that of metaphysical thinking in and through art which is beyond both the mere aesthetic viewing of art and a purely philosophic disquisition about art which examines the forms of art in order to show us what we may admire about art-works. As cipher-scripts, African arts tend to require as much 'genius' in deciphering the meanings intended in them as there was 'genius' in the artists who assembled them. Metaphysical thinking in art is for Africans their highest mode of transcending. "Man is that which strives beyond itself; he is not sufficient unto himself."[12]

At last, therefore, the root and source of all existence is uncovered through art, although it is beyond our cognition. Existence is a gift from its primal-source, God himself and the Africans accept this gift with gratitude. It is in this way that African art-works assume their religious, spriritual and moral significance since it is through them that the people make their leap to Transcendence or God or the One Being as the ground of all things. The sprirituality of the African art gets best articulated in the African masquery with all the seriousness attaching to it and all the rituals that accompany it. The mask is the one art-form that usually takes several artists to compose. Its montage demands the artist's entering into communion with his special muse or daimon. In African masks, the five worlds, the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, the human and the divine, all operate concurrently with a certain pitch of unity.

The mineral world is represented by the ritual colors of the sacred chalks. The vegetable world is represented through the colors extracted from varied leaves, the raffia and broom-fingers from palms or hemps, the sculpted

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[12] Jaspers, _Philosophy Vol. 3_, _op_. _cit_., p. 145.

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wood and the gum from the gum-tree. The animal world assumes its role through animal horns and skin, the feathers of birds or in the completed mask which assumes the form of one animal or the other. The human world blends in through the mask's usage of the human voice, hands and feet during the ritual performance. Finally, the divine world is that which is the ultimate goal depicted in the mask which represents one or the other of varied spirits or heroes. The first four worlds, being dematerialized by symbolization enter into the spirit of divine world by sublation in a process analogous to the humanization of material foods through digestion. In the second person of the mask, therefore, all of existence meets. The power and dignity of the mask takes its essence from the resultant unity. The mask is a spirit, a god. It is venerated. Sacrifices are made to the mask. The distant gods or spirits assume the empirical forms of this material universe and in this way reside among men and perform those mysterious acts that belong only to the spirit world in which man will end when by death he transcends the infirmities of this world. The masks, as we saw earlier, give substance to man's being in the world. They instill such strength for living in the Africans that they become optimistic about life. They inspire all in the community with the spirit of self-acceptance and self-esteem, a spirit which is easily communicable from person to person. In other words, the masks create an atmosphere of harmonious

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living among the people. Through the masks Transcendence itself, as it were, speaks directly to man and is no longer mediated as in the case of the other forms of cipher-scripts. Masks bring and transmit immediately the messages from the yonder world. Masks are a cipher that speaks more directly to man. Through them the ancestors come alive again, the past and the present meet face to face, and history is ritualized.

Another form of the African art that deserves our examination is music. Music pervades and permeates each and every moment of the Africans' life cycle. From marriage, birth, naming ceremonies, initiation-rituals, such as initiation into the occult societies, into the societies of titled men and women, and the age-set initiation, to the festival of the seasons, and finally down to death itself, music accompanies each phase of life. There are innumerable forms of music which are appropriate to every stage in the cycle of life. Dancing of course is intrinsic to the African music. There is no music for the Africans which cannot be accompanied by dance. Music belongs to living to such an extent that to take away the 'drum,' which is the Africans' generic term for all forms of music, would be to take away the whole of life. All occasions of joy, of sadness, are accompanied by and expressed through music. Whether they are in the fields planting or harvesting, whether they are in the market buying and selling, whether they are at worship or engaged in ritual

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processions often led by the masks, Africans express their self-understanding and the inner meanings and values attaching to these occasions through music.

By music the Africans attempt, for example, to dissolve the existential tension deriving from the paradox of that ultimate situation of man's being in his finite world, namely, that of living within simultaneous dying. At the actual event when death occurs, especially in the case of a young man in the prime of life, sad music announces the death to all people both far and near. By its very awesome sonority it protests against death. The sound projects two images. Firstly, it vividly conjures up the picture of the all-encompassing wickedness of death. Secondly, it brings home to every person the unhappy grasp of his own existentially distressing fate, that while he lives, death is always at his door. This sad music thus summons all the people in the town and the neighboring towns to rush to the scene of "Aru," meaning the "pollution" or "abomination" committed by death.[13] The assembled crowds are incited to horrible passions of anger and lamentation, as the sad music 'crescends' all the more. The women surround the corpse and cry out lamentations whose volume blends with and adds to the sadness of the music. The men crowd around the musicians meditating and sporadically, according as the one or the other gets all the more aggravated, yell out crippling cries of sadness. They presently dance to the music with the expressions of fury against death, and frenzied as they now are by the music, they spontaneously race up and down violently knocking down things in their way as though they were kicking death itself to death.

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[13] Ilogu, Christianity and Ibo Culture, op. cit., p. 124.

Later, as soon as the body has been interred amidst all appropriate traditional rituals, the sad music is replaced by the joyous form of music, the symbol of triumph over death, for now the dead one has returned to the spirit world which transcends death. With these forms of music, that scene of 'Aru' is transformed into one of happiness and each one rejoices because he now grasps inwardly that his spirit or soul is immortal and therefore in turn transcends death ultimately. The writing of Karl Jaspers is pertinent once again.

> In music it is the form of self-being as temporal existence that becomes a cipher. Music makes transcendence speak in the inwardness of a being that assumes temporal form as it disappears. ... Music touches the core of Existenz, so to speak, when it turns the universal form of existential existence into its own reality. Nothing, no object, gets between music and self-being. Each musical reality may become the present reality of the performing or listening participant who will allow his temporal form of existence, structured and filled by the sound alone, to grow transparent.[14]

If therefore one wishes to know the definition and value of man for the Africans, one must listen to the hidden messages of their music. In its polyrhythmic forms, African music organizes into a unified 'whole' all of the

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[14] Jaspers, Philosophy Vol. 3, op. cit., pp. 172-73.

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traditional and cultural meanings, realities and values, and blends them with the not-yet acquired but imaginable meanings from the realm of possibilities and, finally, delivers them to the dancers, viewers, and listeners. In this way it gives a free reign especially to the dancers whose inner-personal-being as freedom is called forth to an articulate self-presence. The transparent self as freedom is disclosed as such by each dancer as he or she dances in response to the call by the music to give expression to the wealth and uniqueness of his or her self-being. The music strikes from the ground of Being and the crowds respond with a metaphorical exclamation -- "Akwa Ani!" which translates "From the Egg of the Earth!" The musicians in accordance with their inspiration have drummed from there, the beyond. Each dancer uses all the parts of his body and with one part he responds to one or the other of the rhythms while with the other parts he responds to the others. No two dancers give the same expression and gestures. Each dances out his personal grasp of his relationship with Being, a stand which only occurs in authentic freedom. By dancing, each communicates himself as freedom to the viewers who cheer and rush out to make gifts of money.

We may ask what is it that moves the spectators to make these gifts to the dancers and musicians? They too, the spectators, have the depths and essence of their self-being made present to them by the musicians and dancers.

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The feeling and self-experiencing of themselves as freedom rooted in Transcendence or Being has been communicated to them in a special form by the music and dance. Everyone feels and senses himself as coming from the same transcendental primordial origin as the others. The nature of this origin reveals to all that they are gifts to themselves and to one another. Being gifts they exchange gifts and love with one another at the instigation of the music. Authentic communication from person to person is thus enhanced.

To sum up, therefore, we have presented the Africans' depth and richness of metaphysical or meditative thinking by which they actively align with Being for their meaningful living and acceptance of life's values. Man as gift, as love, and as freedom, has been disclosed in a unique fashion by the African artistry. The active historical consciousness of the Africans has been grounded ontologically in the African art-works. So it is that their wholistic view of all beings is brought to the home-land, so to speak, of the African self-consciousness. The Africans' highest mode of transcending (which is basically the essence of any culture) has been disclosed by the above examination of the African art institution.

With the above in mind, therefore, we will now proceed to the concluding chapter of this work. We intend to determine how all those captured messages of transcendence are translated into the Africans' actual daily living as the formal cause of their cultural-behavioral patterns.

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Hence, we will examine the value that Africans place on man as that value gets spelled out through the societal roles of men, women, and children, as determined by the basic cultural virtues that prevail in the African lifestyle.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AFRICAN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY: TRADITIONAL KINSHIP, EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

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He that has a brother must hold him to his heart,
For a kinsman cannot be bought in the market,
Neither is a brother bought with money,
Is everyone here?
(Hele ee he ee he)
Are you all here?
(Hele ee he ee he)
The letter said
That money cannot buy a kinsman,
(Hele ee he ee he)
That he who has brothers
Has more than riches can buy.
(Hele ee he ee he)[1]

This quotation is taken from the daily sayings and songs of the Africans, as recorded by Achebe. We adopt it because to us it is analogous to a single reed which alone is sufficient to indicate the direction of the wind. This poem indicates the Africans' existential and functional attitude toward each person in the society. In it we have the depth of the value bestowed upon each African person by his or her community. It is an everyday saying, a constant song which is indicative of the African dynamic ethical principle which guides all unto an open-minded will to a mutual recognition and acceptance of one another. By it, material wealth and riches have been situated in their rightful and meaningful place, namely, as subservient to man who is himself invaluable. It is an educational principle in that it teaches the Africans the hierarchy and priority of their cultural values. The African social philosophy also derives from it because it is prescriptive of the leading idea in social interaction. In it we have the foundation of the Africans' principal cultural virtue, namely, the virtue of love, since to 'hold to heart a brother' means to love him. And because love binds hearts together we have the African We-hood context in which and through which the people spell out their existential living with articulate understanding. In other words, by reason of the act of loving as their cultural premise and with love generating its binding force which yields an understanding We-hood, the Africans have developed a high degree of personal involvement with one another's concerns in the community. With such personal interiorization of one another, living becomes an issue of sharing life together to the extent that each person has psychologically found his or her personal existence ever more meaningful. That being so, such traits as deviance, alienation, and anomie (terms which sociologists use to distinguish various infractions of accepted norms), along with revolt or apathy with regard to these norms, are very rarely encountered within African culture. An African community is one in which no person, young or old, is ever love-starved and hence inclined to engage obsessively in repressing the natural desire for union and communion with others and consequently ending in a "final state of apathy or being without feeling, a form of ultimate boredom."[2] For after

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[1] Achebe, Chinua, No Longer At Ease (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1969), p. 123.

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[2] Flanagan, Joseph S.J., Transcendental Dialectic of

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all, every person as the saying and the song indicate is 'owned' by all who keep him or her to heart, an act which reveals the caring responsibility with which the Africans treat each person. In Africa no one in the society is treated with lack of concern by the others. All strive to make authentic human communication in which life meets life permeate through all of their acts of existence. Every individual person in the society is so surrounded by the love, concern, care, understanding and responsiveness of the others that aberrations are practically inconceivable. Rather, he or she adopts the principle of the squirrel who in an African proverb has said, 'Ibidebe akwu nso ka eji atataya uso,' i.e., "to live closer to the palm tree gives the eating of its nuts a special flavor." We thus have the existential psychological foundation for the Africans' life-style of 'closeness' but not 'closed-ness.' It is the closeness of a living style in which each person 'belongs to' and in turn is 'belonged-to-by' the others. It is therefore only by adopting the life-style of 'closeness' or 'belongingness' that an African becomes immersed in the culture's spiritual substance, love, and by love he or she acquires the maximum existential fulfillment of personhood beyond a mere individual-hood.

Now, it is this spiritual substance of the culture that was the intended legacy of the ancients, the founders

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Desire and Fear, a lecture presented at Lonergan Workshop III, Boston College, June 14-18, 1976, p. 42.

of the African culture. To define the family or kinship from the African perspective, one has to draw from that primordial intention in which is founded all of Africa's social philosophy. We may ask, what then is the ontological foundation of that intention? We ask this because as we saw in the preceding chapter, the intention has to do with the truth of Being which is the way things are. What then is the anchoring root of the African founding intentionality? As we saw earlier, according to the Africans the universe is a unified organic whole in which each of the four empirical worlds -- the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human -- itself forms a unit but only as a part within the larger whole of the unity of nature. Moreover, this organic Nature 'spiritually' blends with the divine world to give the Africans the Ultimate Whole of all life. It is this conception of all of existence as made up of patterned wholes that has given ancestral Africans the logic by which they have viewed their human society as an entity which must be through and through whollistic if it is to be authentically true to itself. Man therefore must form a union and communion with other men in order to qualify for his own existence. The society of human beings as one whole within the larger whole of nature was therefore the intention of the primordial founders of the African society. Hence, the cultural norm is that each and every individual must so act and behave toward others as to maintain that Unit. That this is so is evi-

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denced by two African cultural expressions. "Tuu-fiakwa' is always a sound uttered by the Africans especially the aged men and women of the community who are the custodians of the tradition, a sound always accompanied with an emission of spittle and always evoked whenever an adult man or woman is detected as tending toward indifferentism by his or her want of love and concern for others. This gesture is followed immediately by the expression in words, "Madu madu ibeya na adighmma." The "Tuu-fiakwa" accompanied by the spitting out of saliva is a symbolic expression which denounces and spits away, as it were, the impending evil to the society through the one who would not show love to others. The words, "Madu madu ibeya na adigh mma" which follow, literally mean, "the man to whom other men are not good enough!" This implies that such a one must either correct himself or he is not acceptable in the community. Another such expression enunciates a proverb: "A kinsman who strays into trouble must first be saved from it by all, then, afterwards he must be questioned as to why he dared stray into trouble to start with."[3] The most significant emphasis here is the concern that all in the community must show the delinquent who must not be left in isolation. He or she is always recognized as an indispensable part of the functional human whole. The very essence of the African

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[3] This proverb is always on the lips of the African elders who speak from the cultural common store of traditional meanings at assemblies of villages or towns. I quote from my lived-experience.

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social interaction has to be located within the dynamics of that intention.

With the above analysis of the nature of that intention in mind, we must now proceed to inquire as to whether it is that intention that has been the formal cause of the African family structure. A short digression may be useful here. Since the emergence of the science of anthropology and related sciences, the term 'extended' has been used to describe the African family pattern. It is a term very alien to the African experience. The African would ask, in relation to what unextended family pattern must we understand the term "extended"? What members in the African family compounds are the family of whom the others are the extension? Who is the extension of whom? The truth of the issue is that no African, before the anthropologists arrived on the scene, could have imagined the possibility of such a term in reference to his or her family. The Western nuclear family system was the anthropological yardstick for judging the other nations' family patterns. As we saw in the chapter on African religion, the naming ceremony of each newly born child informs us of the impact of that ritual on the Africans. It is a ritual which re-enacts the family's history as inclusive of every newly born child. The child's geneology which is traced by that naming-ritual indicates to the assembly of the brethren how the child takes its rightful place in the family. The child has been intended, like everyone else, by the unbroken line of

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the family's ancestry. As Edmund Ilogu observes:

> People who trace their origin to common ancestors must keep together and help one another or else they incur the displeasure of these ancestor spirits.[4]

This strong belief that they would be censured by these dead ancestral gods if they did not live and accept one another as members of one family, 'one womb,' reveals the reverence the Africans have for the immortal intention of their family ancestors. It is in this reverence for that intention that we have the ontological explanation for the Africans' cult of their dead as well as of living ancestors. In order to keep that intention always alive, Africans live together in family compounds of several houses, shrines of gods, ancestral shrines, gardens and barns. Each compound occupies a large portion of land encircled by one continuous wall and having only one massive entrance and exit gate. The one wall and one gate symbolize the closeness and identity with which all the numerous members of the family relate to one another.

Hence it is clear, firstly, that the ancestral intention has been the directive norm or the formal cause of the Africans' family structurization. Secondly, the anthropologists' term, 'extended' has no valid basis of application to the African family pattern. The founding intentionality of the African family system has its intrinsic historicality in that it embodies simultaneously all

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[4] Ilogu, Christianity and Ibo Culture, op. cit., p. 36.

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of the family's 'pasts' in the founding dead ancestors themselves who now live in the compound by reason of their visible altars or shrines, along with all of its 'presents,' the men, women and children of the compound and finally all of its 'futures,' the as yet unborn who are and have been anticipated by past and present family members. The African family, then, is only as extended as it is ontologically, as a unity of an anticipated and fulfilled historicality.

But is the one empirically observable family compound all that there is to the African traditional familyhood? This is a question we have already anticipated when we examined the ritual of the naming ceremony. We saw that at such occasions several family compounds assemble together before the sun-god shrine of the new child's own compound. The reason for this act is that the other compounds are linked in blood with the child, and hence have a common known origin. Therefore, in Africa, several family compounds make up what the Africans know as a real family unit. Originally, it had occupied one compound but because of spatial limitations one or two of the earlier brothers had moved out to form another 'branch,' and this procedure was repeated until we now have the several compounds of a family. Several such family units make up an African village which is itself a larger family unit. Village units together give us an African town whose members all derive from one family lineage. When we move on to a clan made up of several towns or to a tribe internally composed of several clans, the memory of the family tree tends to dim but the consciousness of that primordial intentionality with all of its inclusivity perdures.

It is within the context of this realization that Julius Nyerere, of Tanzania, an African country, has entitled his "Essays on Socialism" - UJAMAA, which means FAMILY-HOOD. He declares that the basis of African Socialism is Ujamaa:

> Ujamaa, then, or Familyhood, describes our (African) socialism. It is opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man; and it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man. We, in Africa, have no more need of being 'converted' to socialism than we have of being 'taught' democracy. Both are rooted in our own past -- the traditional society which produced us. ... Our recognition of the family to which we all belong must be 'extended' yet further -- beyond the tribe, the community, the nation, or even the continent -- to embrace the whole society of mankind.[5]

Such then is the African concept of the family. The reality behind this concept is a complex series of intricately intertwined Wholes within larger and ever-widening wholes starting from a compound. It is analogous to a tree blossoming into the heights with endless series of interconnected branches. This concept perfectly coincides with the family as it is in itself, and governs the Africans' mental attitude or practical will to will one another's welfare according to the intention of the forerunners of the culture. According to the Africans therefore, an individual person's freedom is the freedom to choose, as well as work for the good of the family which involves and implicates the good of himself or herself. This is the all-embracing and fundamental principle which underlies and guides all the traditional African educational and economic systems. The good of the family is the primary purpose of all African social interaction. It provides the Africans with the best possible basis of freedom for all. All can agree upon it and identify with it because it emanates from innermost self-understanding of each person. As such, it is a premise for the existential realization of the highest human potentialities.

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[5] Nyerere, Julius, Ujamaa, Essays on Socialism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 12.

How does this principle operate in practice and therefore orient African social behavior, and in particular how does it influence the cultural education of the young? In an African community everyone who has passed the age of infancy assumes the role of an educator. Each person has grown up with the traditional stories or myths, and has, in fact, been accustomed to daily competition as to who can tell more such stories. Myths and proverbs abound which shed light on every aspect of good moral and cultural behavior. We can cite a few substantiating examples. With regard to the norm that one should be in constant awareness and recognition of one's existential root for 'being-in-the-world,' there is the myth repeatedly told especially by the elders:

> Once, there lived a foolish man. He married a wife. The wife conceived and bore a male child. The man rushed to his father and said: "Father! I have got a son before you." The father replied: "Son! who then is your father?"

With regard to the cultural norm that everyone should live the life of belongingness with the 'others,' his like in being, through the good usage of his freedom the bat-myth is adopted:

> Once, in those days, all the flying animals had a meeting to levy themselves for their social well-being. The bat was invited. He would not comply arguing that he was not of their family because he has fur and not feathers. They let him go. Later, the animals of the ground had a similar meeting. With them the bat argued that because he has wings and flies, he is not their kind and therefore could not be involved. They let him go. A little later those animals of the air had a delightful feast of plenty to eat. The bat came forward and demanded a share of which he was quickly denied. The animals of the ground in turn disowned him in a similar manner. From then on and to this day, the bat became a wretched vagabond, neither belonging to those animals of the 'ups' nor to those of the 'downs.'

The tortoise is an archetypal animal of wit, cunning and deceit. His tricks always brought upon him far worse evils than he had imposed on others. Thus, he always outwits himself:

> At that time a certain town of the animals of the air had a great feast to which they invited all winged and feathered animals. The tortoise though uninvited because of his lack of wings and feathers was the only animal who knew the way to that town. So, eagles, vultures, hawks, kites and such like animals consulted the tortoise who agreed to lead them to the town, a good he would do for them if he could acquire wings and feathers. These animals had a consultation among themselves and agreed upon contributing feathers and thereby equipping the tortoise with the machinery of flight. On the way, the tortoise asked everyone what name he was going to answer at the introduction. Each of the birds

> suggested his own name, eagle, hawk, etc. The tortoise said he was going to answer, "All-of-you." When they arrived, the hosts presented a large pot of stew filled with delicious meat and said, "this is for all of you." The tortoise fell to eating it alone, the others indignantly watching on. It was soon the time for the guests to return home. In anger each of the birds took away his contributed feather from the tortoise. He was stranded. He begged of his friend, the hawk, to give a message to his wife, namely, that she should bring out of his and her houses all the pillows and such like soft things and heap them on the outside of his compound. The hawk reversed the message. The tortoise's wife therefore heaped stones and all hard things she could lay hand on. The tortoise rolled off from the heavens and landed upon the hard heap. He broke his shell to pieces. A dibia, that is, a surgeon, was sent for who pieced him together. That is why the tortoise has a rough, scaly back.[6]

The above examples suffice to indicate to what extent the Africans adopt such stories and myths as perennial tools for the education of their young. We should not attempt to explain the myth because the people themselves do not do so. The reason for this is that each myth has multiple meanings which are preserved in the story. Hence, the story is simply told with the suggestion of one or two of its possible applications. The writing of Karl Jaspers confirms the correctness of such usage of myths by the Africans.

> Myths relate events said to have determined the ground and the essence of existence. They serve to resolve existential tensions, not by rational cognition, but by telling a story. ... Whenever myths are interpreted, the result is a false simplification: Their historical content is lost, and the interpretation becomes an inversion: what looks in it like knowable necessity is

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[6] My knowledge of these myths stems from the fact that I was raised under the culture we are considering.

> not supposed to be known as necessary in the myths at all.[7]

The women in the community educate the young girls on the cultural virtues for becoming good wives and mothers through the telling of other such myths. The men in like manner teach the young boys on how to be brave, industrious, patient and responsible in order to qualify as husbands and fathers. The transcendental power of the message of myths has been so captured and recognized by the Africans that no matter how novel a phenomenon may seem, its ultimate fittedness within the schema of genuine human communication must be expandable by at least the one or the other of the historic myths and should such a novel event defy the grounding efficacy of myths, it remains culturally unacceptable to the people.

In traditional Africa, marriage is strictly exogammous on account of the broad understanding of kinship. That is why the importation of the Western cultural recognition of marriage with cousins of third and fourth degree by the Christian missionaries meets with massive cultural resistance in Africa. Marriage within traceable blood links between man and woman is an abomination to the African. Edmund Ilogu makes the following commentary on this attitude.

> The rule of exogamy is rigidly applied to forbid marriage between any two members of the same lineage. If any kind of kinship relationship can be faintly established, marriage is forbidden, but if

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[7] Jaspers, Philosophy Vol. 3, op. cit., p. 116.

> any had taken place unknowingly, due to the remoteness of the relationship, when such relationship is established no matter how vaguely, a sacrifice for the removal of 'aru' or pollution or abomination is performed. The kinship relationship is severed by this special sacrifice consisting of kola nuts and sheep while the marriage is allowed to continue.[8]

Because the kinship notion among the Africans is such as we have specified above, the fundamental aim of education is to ground and initiate the young into an authentic sense of familyhood. It is only with such genuine and functional sense that anyone can attain his or her genuine cultural personhood. An orthodox African is a person who loves us in truth. But a person who does not love and value his or her family which is the same as a true love of self has no evidence to offer us that we, the external others, can be loved by him or her. A true African personality is one in whom all in the society can see and find themselves mirrored. It is a phenomenon that can obtain only if one habitually lives the life of loving-contests which starts from and grounds the family. It is in this sense of familyhood that we have also the foundation for the often quoted African virtue of hospitality toward strangers who are considered almost as members of the family.

Furthermore, because the Africans have a strong belief that the evil act of one person in the society can bring the anger of the gods upon all, all in the society or community actively combine to educate every youth. That is why a married woman in a village, for instance, who has been observed for a period of time to be uninvolved in correcting little children in the neighborhood and who thereby fails to fulfill her role as 'mother' is quickly questioned by the elders. The African concept of a person as one 'in' whom all the others are and he or she 'in' them (within the context of the society) to the extent that the evil act of one person involves the entire community has been disclosed by Chinua Achebe through the chief character of his novel, Things Fall Apart. Okonkwo has forgotten that it was the Week of Peace in his town of Umuofia and he beat his wife very severely. It was unheard of to beat somebody during the sacred week. Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess, came upon Okonkwo who presented him with a kola nut, as is the custom, but he said:

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[8] Ilogu, Christianity and Ibo Culture, op. cit., p. 29.

> Take away your kola nut. I shall not eat in the house of a man who has no respect for our gods and ancestors. Listen to me. ... The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish. You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow a she goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries.[9]

From the preceding an African ethical formula emerges which may be described at this point as a negative universal maxim -- "Act in such a way that the Wehood, a whole of which you are a dynamic part, will not be afflicted by your conduct."[10] That man is freedom and therefore capable of responsibility and consequently of accountability is obviously an elementary assumption of the Africans. That this is so becomes clearer if we consider the question of human births into the family and the world. Every birth has come about through the conscious free intentions and free decisions of a series of linked free subjects starting from the present parents and community and going back to the primordial parents and community and eventually to God Himself. The birth of human beings into the world involves more than the mere natural mechanics of biology. The community as a whole wills each birth. This is evidenced through a number of facts. Firstly, no one, especially the aged men and women, prays without reminding the gods of the greatest wishes of the community:

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[9] Achebe, Things Fall Apart, op. cit., pp. 31, 32.

> It is life we want. It is children we want. We will the life of everyone both the aged and the young. It is the life of man, the life of woman, that we want.[11]

This is a traditional formula and in it everyone grasps himself as involved, as willed, as intended by the 'brethren.' As a result, he or she feels inwardly the existential urge to dance freely the tune of such free intentionality and further freely to accept the cultural ethical maxim

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[10] My own summary.

[11] We would like to note that the man or the woman who uses this ritual formula uses the personal plural pronoun, 'we,' not in the royal sense but in a strictly literal sense as the petitioner assumes the role of the spokesman of the society.

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begotten of that grounding act of freedom. Thus every individual person in an African community, itself an all-inclusive yet self-transcending entity, self-interestedly recognizes, accepts, and identifies himself with each and all in the society for whose self-good, the good of the Wehood, he conducts himself. Secondly, the African notion of the essence of marriage shows forth remotely through the reverence bestowed upon fertility as we have shown, and proximately, through the reverential status of womanhood as the articulate human participation in the powers of fertility. This attitude is manifest in the practical attitudes of care, value, respect, and in the ritual acts of homage which the African mother commands in society. Because everyone sees every mother commanding such societal respect, everyone logically sees himself or herself as valued and willed by the community even before his or her actual birth. No one forgets that he comes to be an actual member or part of the whole community through being born by a 'mother-wife' of the community. Thirdly, if we consider the process of African marriage ceremonies and rituals, everyone observes and experiences the seriousness with which the whole community gets involved with and participates in the marriage of the woman, a new 'wife-mother' of the community. The same reverence is also manifested through other types of activities and rituals which attend the giving away of a community's daughter in marriage.

It follows therefore that from the lived-experience of the phenomena of being born by a mother, of marrying wives into the community and of giving daughters away in marriage with all the striking societal rituals and homages surrounding them, an African adopts as from his or her own personal source the cultural norms of society. These norms have their origin from the inner wells of human freedom which underlie such fundamental human activities.

That being so, would it be legitimate to ask such questions as the following: Does such a general or universal adoption of cultural norms not generate a pseudo-cultural communication where everyone does, believes and thinks the same? Are opinions, fears, joys and goals not imperceptibly transferable from person to person because of such an original, unquestioning identification of all? In other words, living in such a community, is the lucidity of one's self-consciousness not veiled and therefore one is not yet in authentic human communication because one is not yet aware of what Immanuel Kant might name autonomous selfhood or will? In such a community is each person not reduced to an ego point which is substitutable for another mere ego point? The purpose of this series of questions can be better illustrated by the 'fate' of Obi Okonkwo, the chief character in No Longer At Ease by Chinua Achebe. The summary of the story runs thus: Obi was sent to England for a four-year university education as a result of the contributions of his town's people. He returned home to Africa now oscillating between two

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cultures, and then made a personal individualistic decision to marry an African woman whom he had met in England. But he was now opposed in that marriage by his entire town's people:

> "Very good," said Joseph bitterly. "Are you going to marry the English way or are you going to ask your people to approach her people according to custom?" ... "What you are going to do concerns not only yourself but your whole family and future generations. If one finger brings oil it soils the others. In the future when we are all civilized, anybody may marry anybody. But that time has not come. ... "What is an engagement ring? Our fathers did not marry with rings. It is not too late to change [your decision]. Remember you are the one and only Umuofia son to be educated overseas. We do not want to be like the unfortunate child who grows his first tooth and grows a decayed one."

At one of the monthly meetings of the Umuofia Progressive Union, Lagos Branch, the President had this to say to Obi and he did so on behalf of the entire town.

> "You are one of us, so we must bare our mind to you. ... What the government pays you is more than enough unless you go into bad ways." Many of the people said: "God forbid!" "We cannot afford bad ways," went on the President. ... You may ask why I am saying all this. I have heard that you are moving about with a girl of doubtful ancestry, and even thinking of marrying her...[12]

As a result of such remonstrations, Obi has to withdraw his decision to marry the woman of his choice. But then, does this not show that in an African community no one may safely choose as he decides? In other words, is an African society not unaccommodating of the freedom of an individual who wants to have his or her own way?

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[12] Achebe, No Longer At Ease, op. cit., pp. 75-82.

Now, the above questions are crucial because only the apt answer to them will disclose the ontological wealth of Africa's social interaction and authentic human communication.

But we have already given the answer by our analysis of the constitutive elements of the African cultural-ethical norm that "one should so act as not to bring afflictions to the entire society of which one is a dynamic part." This is an ethical principle that presupposes and recognizes each person's free capability for deviance. It is a principle underpinned through and through by freedom itself. Since the Africans' sacred whollistic view of each of the five worlds and of all of them put together is such a strong existential ideal, how could an African society come to let a member of its human world go his or her own way, a thing which would be tantamount to the polluting of the whole? The insistence then, rather than being a hindrance to one's usage of freedom, is really designed to facilitate the good use of one's freedom, especially insofar as one's interest is basically involved. For the same reason no law anywhere commands anyone to love himself. But since selfish love of self is bound to implicate others, those others rightly rebel against such purely egotistical conduct.

We must bear in mind that we are dealing with the question of practical freedom, a cultural existential phenomenon within a society, not with the abstract meta-

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physical examination of freedom. In this latter case, any consciously deliberated human act derives from freedom, and is an index of freedom. This would be true even of the act of suicide. Freedom abstractly considered admits of all possible and imaginable individual decisions and choices even to the point of the option not to choose which is itself a choice and proof of freedom. But with regard to practical freedom, since no one person alone makes up a community on which a culture inheres, there is then the question of the ongoing dialectic of the individual's freedom and the societal freedom that originally produced and conserves its cultural norms. The logic, then, of the African community is that since it has been through the free decisions and choices of the fore-runners of their community to establish a free bond which they intended and passed on to posterity, it is improper for one to decide abstractly against those meanings and realities thus handed down. According to the Africans there is no such thing as freedom's reason to negate freedom in the practical order. It is still within one's free self-articulation that one chooses to unite with primordial freedom's constitutions, the substance of a culture. To unite is not the same as merely to conform. The latter attitude is not truly that of a free agent because of its externalness while the former attitude is because it reflects on what is fundamental to human living in a society. The questions we are discussing therefore do not have any

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ground of legitimization because they argue for an abstract freedom which should not be confused with practical cultural freedom. Conformity must not be confused with the freely embraced unity which the African culture stands for.

Further, the delicate dialectic of the individual's freedom and the African community's freedom is analogous to the dialectic of the part and its whole in a sentence. Although the whole, which is the meaning of the sentence, so transcends each of the parts, namely, the words, that the latter derive their meaningfulness only in the context of the former, nonetheless the role of the part cannot be minimized or eliminated. Now another name for the traditional African kinship Institution is the Wehood structure in which everyone is in everyone else. It is the Wehood that gives the Africans their only community to such an extent that the loss of any one individual person impairs the strength of the sense of the Wehood. That is why, for instance, the Africans strive to surround their sick with care so that they may revive through responding to the human warmth being imparted to them. That is also why the community is so concerned, as in the case of Obi, that none of its members should marry a woman and introduce her into the Wehood, if the myths forbid such an alliance. In Africa, a married woman is more than the concern of just one man or even just a single group of family compounds. She is the assurance of the society's continuance in history. She is the mother of the future as well as the living symbol of the ancestral primordial motherhood and of fertility itself. Eliade makes the following appropriate comment in this regard.

> Marriage and the collective orgy echo mythical prototypes; they are repeated because they were consecrated in the beginning ("in those days," in illo tempore, ab origine) by gods, ancestors or heroes.[13]

We have already explored at length the sacrality which Africans attribute to their tradition as carried by their myths which for Eliade contain an "archaic ontology":

> Archaic ontology [consists of] the conceptions of being and reality that can be read from the behavior of the man of the premodern societies ... obviously, the metaphysical concepts of the archaic world were not always formulated in theoretical language; but the symbol, the myth, the rite, express, on different planes and through the means proper to them, a complex system of coherent affirmations about the ultimate reality of things, a system that can be regarded as constituting a metaphysics.[14]

Now no person, man or woman, is valued by the Africans except on the basis of that root from which he or she is a given to society, that is, through the mother-wife in the community. It follows therefore that an objection based upon Obi's case totally misses the African perspective. We ought to emphasize the point that when the Africans identify with their existential kinship, Wehood or tradition, they do not do so without a self-convincing truth to which an authentic societal exercise of freedom should rightfully and logically yield in order for one to adopt one's cultural heritage. For one can acquire one's genuine human historical personhood only through such an act of adoption.

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[13] Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return, op. cit., p. 4.

[14] Ibid., p. 3.

Lastly, as we have indicated earlier, life is such a shared phenomenon among the Africans that the age-set organization has been psychologically designed for several reasons: firstly, so as to make sure of the thread of history and the heightening of its consciousness; secondly, to tighten the feel and sense of the intended and bequeathed bond of the brethren among themselves; thirdly, in order that each set might compete with those before it as well as those after it in the emulation of outstanding achievements. Africans so share in the glory of the achievements of each of their community's members that everyone makes the struggle to give expression to his or her unique talents through some concrete achievement. The African positive cultural norm therefore is that "you should so struggle toward some unique success that all the others of your society may profit by your action."[15] This is a norm that manifests the Africans' recognition of each person's freedom to strive for his or her personal good, in which the good of the entire community basically resides. Just as the evil act of one person afflicts the others, his good act also profits all. Anthropologists are effective at observing and recording the rites of Africa's age-set initiations. But they do not penetrate into the fundamental spirit and intentions behind those ceremonials, namely, that they are an expression of the people's recognition of the initiates as new 'freedoms' who can now perform independent but responsible acts for the good of all. Also it should be noted that various communal duties, e.g., cleaning the springs, village squares, market places and farm roads, are evenly distributed in such fashion that idlers are in constant check. Edmund Ilogu observes:

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[15] From my personal lived experience of the phenomenon.

> As members of the masquerade societies they (the male age-sets) serve as village night guards, collectors of fines, prosecutors of all forms of offenders, and therefore protectors of public morality. ... The age set as an institution provides impetus towards achievements, ambition and hard work because no one likes to be left behind by the members of his own set.[16]

In conclusion, it follows therefore that each individual person's existence is so valued by the society that in order for one to 'live' but not just merely to 'exist,' the traditional African community makes sure to check, counsel and guard one into 'living' as befits humans. African society makes sure of its members' identification by interest in and interiorized care for one another. The practical attitude derives from the living psychology of human beings who never act with indifference to their

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[16] Ilogu, op. cit., p. 27.

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personal interests which coincide with those of the community. It further follows, therefore, that an African traditional society is one in which culturally every individual's interests have been so taken into consideration even before his birth that, after his loving introduction into the community, there can be little possibility for deviance, naked individualism, isolationism, anomie or apathy.

Up to this point, we have not specifically referred to the economic organization of the distribution of material goods in African society. The African community is one in which the spiritual goods accruing to interpersonal relationships are not without implications concerning the material goods necessary for each individual's biological sustenance. We can safely quote extensively the authority of Julius Nyerere in this matter.

> Since the appearance of millionaires in a society does not depend on its affluence, sociologists may find it interesting to try and find out why our societies in Africa did not in fact, produce any millionaires -- for we certainly had enough (material) wealth to create a few. I think they would discover that it was because of the organization of traditional African society -- its distribution of the wealth it produced -- was such that there was hardly any room for parasitism. They might also say, of course, that as a result of this Africa could not produce a class of leisured landowners, and therefore there was nobody to produce the works of art, of science which capitalist society can boast. But works of art and the achievements of science are products of the intellect -- which, like land, is one of God's gifts to man. And I cannot believe that God is so careless as to have made use of one of His gifts depend on the 'misuse' of another! ... For when a society is so organized that it cares about its individuals, then, provided

> he is willing to work, no individual within that society should worry what will happen today. Society itself should look after him or his widow or his orphans. This is exactly what traditional African society succeeded in doing.[17]

Edmund Ilogu points out in regard to the same economic issue that life is such a sharing phenomenon among the Africans that "it is a common feature of lineage structure for a man to educate up to University level overseas sixth and seventh cousins or ordinary fellow-villagers." The virtue of material self-denial is so operative among the Africans that all the community is involved in the economic good of every individual.

> One who has spent all his earnings in these days of money income to educate relatives, does not expect any special "thank you" for after all he has done no more than his routine community duty.[18]

In traditional Africa, since money cannot buy a brother and since the petitioner daily repeats the consciousness of its subservience to man, it follows that material necessities cannot be denied by any one member of society to another. Since fertility is such an all-encompassing functional idea in the African culture, the earth or land which is its primary archetype is not denied to anyone in an African society because she is the source of all wealth and livelihood. As we noted earlier, it is a practical ethical belief among the Africans that a person is authen-

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[17] Nyerere, Ujamaa, Essays on Socialism, op. cit., pp. 5-7.

[18] Ilogu, Christianity and Ibo Culture, op. cit., p. 135.

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tic insofar as he is at-one-ment with the whole of Nature which is symbolized by the earth. That being so, it would be illogical to the Africans that any family compound should not only have its own land on which to live but also another on which to farm. Thus an African who is not a landowner is traditionally inconceivable. Hence, the traditional African notion of man grounds a practice of even distribution of wealth. Every town, besides its family compounds and the private and communal lands of each village within the town, has an additional general communal land. This property is open to everyone in the entire town for hunting, gathering of wood, grass or rocks and, above all, for periodic farming during the year. Moreover, the priest of the earth-god declares this last function of the land. This periodic farming on the greater community's land by all is expressive of several underlying realities. Firstly, it awakens in all the spirit of true competition toward material self-dependence. Secondly, it increases the sense of societal unity and understanding. Those who happily work together, as is always the experience at such farming amidst signing, jokes, story-telling and sharing of farm-meals, psychologically come to belong more fully together. Thirdly, the African ideal of human living which is at once democratic and socialistic gets articulated in such group farming which nevertheless preserves independent, individual ownership of the harvest. Fourthly, it is a work which

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is symbolic of the land as the geist of the people, as we saw earlier in Chapter V of this work.

From the above the conclusion is obvious that the traditional African economic system is patterned on the family structure itself which is also the channel through which it smoothly flows. The rule, then, is that it is unbecoming of one's human dignity to be in a position of 'eating,' a term by which Africans designate the rich, while brothers and neighbors are starving. Moreover, the tribute and homage-system in Africa inclines people toward equitable distribution of wealth. During the major seasons' feasts, men have the obligation of sending to their fathers and mothers-in-law sizeable gifts from the yields of their farms. Money and clothes often accompany such items of homage and men compete with one another as to who will excel in this virtue of filial piety. In this way the aged men and women in the community get their material support. Nor is it from their sons-in-law alone that they receive these acts of homage. In season and out of season, the younger persons in the family compounds make tributes to their aged members. In this way, the community's working and earning members take care of the aged. It is in this sense that the writing of Julius Nyerere has to be understood, when he notes that:

> Both the "rich" and the "poor" individual were completely secure in African society. Natural catastrophe brought famine, but it brought famine to everybody -- "poor" or "rich." Nobody starved, either of food or of human dignity, because he

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> lacked personal wealth; he could depend on the wealth possessed by the community of which he was a member. That was socialism. That is socialism. There can be no such thing as acquisitive socialism, for that would be another contradiction in terms. Socialism is essentially distributive.[19]

Nyerere goes on to point out that in traditional African society, even the Elder, who appeared to be enjoying himself without working and for whom everybody else appeared to be working, had in fact worked hard all his younger days. Therefore, the wealth he now appeared to possess was not his personally; it was only 'his' as the Elder and the guardian of the group which had produced it. The wealth gave him neither power nor prestige; the respect paid to him by the young was his right, because he was older than they, because he had served his community longer. Moreover, the 'poor' Elder enjoyed as much respect in the society as the 'rich' Elder.

We have discussed the social role of the Elder in the previous chapters. Now, through the care and guardianship of the entire society by the College of the Elders, usually composed of all the oldest members from all the family compounds, certain key and unique features of the African society come to the focus. In the first place, because each Elder represents a family compound of which he is the father, no one's interests are neglected in the decision making of his or her community. Secondly, it becomes easy for everyone to respond enthusiastically to public rulings.

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[19] Nyerere, Ujamaa--Essays on Socialism, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

Thirdly, because to be an Elder and father of a compound means in essence to listen to and coordinate the expressed opinions of the family members and since it is only such blended opinion that the Elder brings to the senate of the Elders, it follows that African society is thoroughly democratic. Through the Elders, no one's insight for the good of the society is ignored. Fourthly, the African democracy assumes a special form in that it takes its origin from the love relationship between the Elder as father and all the members of his family compound. We define the African democracy as the loving-rule of the people through the love-contests of the people. Nothing whatsoever in such a polity becomes external to and hence distressing for any individual person or groups of persons in the society. That is why we emphasized earlier that the African societal virtue is that of living love which sublates the virtue of mere justice.

Who then are the social engineers of African society? Through the mediation of the Elders who represent and guard the bequeathed intentions of the ancestors and the gods, as well as represent all the living members of the community, we safely answer that the social engineers of the African society are: the Absolute Being, God Himself, the servant-gods, the ancestral spirits, the Elders themselves and all the living men and women and children of the society.

To summarize, African society is a community operative on the idea of an intricately threaded spiritual

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spiral-like widening and thickening series of wholes of meanings which situate every one of its members in substantial existential communication. Through participation in this idea, an African moves ever closer to his fellow man with such mutual personal involvement that both thereby achieve their individual personal independent self-consciousness. It is a society in which one never despairs of his self-worth because through loving others one comes to love himself. African society is one in which the writing of Karl Jaspers is forthrightly experienceable:

> In communication I feel responsible not only for myself but for the other, as if he were I and I were he; I do not feel it set in until he meets me half-way. For I do not reach the point of communication by my own action alone; the other's action must match it. ... Only mutual recognition allows both of us as ourselves. Only together can we reach the goal each one is aiming at. ... For it is only in communication that I come to be myself, and it never succeeds if I keep aloof and treat relative and particular communications as if they were final possibilities. The feeling that I am a decisive factor for myself and the other drives me to the utmost readiness for communication. ... The communications in consciousness at large and in tradition are recognizable necessities of existence, without which I could not help sinking into unconsciousness; but the necessity of existential communication is one of [practical] freedom only.[20]

The traditional African society as we have discussed it is one, therefore, in which authentic, well-rooted existential human communication is grounded on love emanating from blood-links which transcend mere external negotiable commodities. Within such a society, no one person is a threat to another; rather each is the basis of the other's self-realization and fulfillment. African society represents a form of unity in which individuality is not absorbed but enhanced.

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[20] Jaspers, Philosophy, Vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

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CONCLUSION

Having accomplished a phenomenology of African existence and a study of her existential self-understanding which is another name for hermeneutics, we now conclude with the hope that Africa, formerly unfamiliar, obscure in meaning and distant, has become real, nearer and more intelligible to our readers. Anthropologists, colonialists and those others who have misinformed the peoples of the world about Africa may now confess that they were in error. In all honesty they should acknowledge that there is no other source from which they themselves derived their own being, human dignity and respectability than that from which the Africans have also derived theirs. Africa then has her own internal cultural human dignity which is by no discernible standard inferior to any other. It becomes obvious that but for the "Hegelian gun-powder" the people of Africa could not have been reduced to the so-called "small men or slaves" who for Plato and Aristotle must serve under the shadows of their cultured masters. This writer was but very recently spoken to by a university professor who said: "If Africa has been exploited before, why must she not continue to be?" It is especially to the people of similar mentality toward Africa that we address the message of this work. It sounds as though we are pleading for empathy for the people of Africa. Rather, we are recalling all the people of the world to a renewed consciousness of that elementary but transcendental ethical criterion, namely, that one should act toward others as he would that they act toward him. No one wants to be exploited, degraded, despised, and treated with unconcernment by others. That is the principle for which Africa stands, especially in these days of her critical nationalistic consciousness. That village, therefore, into which science and technology has made the entire world must be one in which no section of the inhabitants may group together and treat the others as mere objects of the material universe. It is a village in which if anyone cannot love certain others, such a one would do well to walk in silence. Commonplace tolerance is a minimum requirement. Where one wills not to do good to others, such a one should at least desist from doing them harm. No section of this village may be regarded and treated by others as merely convenient, pleasant or useful good for every part is made up of human person's freedoms with all human dignity and meaningful worth.

This work, therefore, calls upon all men and women of the world to enter into a new revolution. We are inviting all to address themselves to the awakening of the highest form of civilization ever known in human history. We can no longer afford the false comfort that we are rich just because others are poor and because we have the power to preserve their poverty. Men, after all, are not fishes who swallow one another in order to grow fatter. We can no longer affect to be saints because others in our limited judgment are sinners. Our neighbors are not dogs whom we may name perjoratively at will in order to neglect them with an easy conscience. For centuries, Africa and Africans have been called by all manner of misleading names to make it easier to enslave them both in their homes and in foreign lands to which they were often carried in chains.

This new revolution to genuine human civilization is one to which Africa has already contributed by her valuation of man with those specifications of him as -- freedom, love and gift to society. It is a civilization in which the tail may no longer wag the dog but rather the reverse. With a superior economic well-being which is the achievement of human science and technology, today's man places others of his human kind but of lesser scientifically economic achievement in the ironic situation of a tail that wags his master, the dog. Economic success has been placed and valued above human beings. The reverse is what this new revolution advocates. The material objects of this world are there for conscious human beings. The African societal philosophy informs us of the orderly priorities of life in which, as the historic song tells us, "mere money cannot buy a human brother." A human being is one who must be subserved by the entire world of material goods. In this regard, we have seen how the African kinship institu-

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tion is normative of the economic sharing of material goods as well as the basis of the African educational institution.

In this new civilization, the African sense of values should be adopted by all. There is a universal need therefore of a change of mental attitudes. It is a change that postulates the activities of human understanding both of self and others. The power of understanding lies in its capacity to generate a common bond between persons, nations and human lives meeting other human lives in authentic communicative love-contests of the African cultural life-style. But is this possible? It would be impossible only if man no longer possesses the native and endowed power of understanding.

The issue, then, is a question of man's evoking and activating his will to understanding, an understanding which is man's fundamental mode of existing in the world. What we are arguing for is the activity of a creative fusion of human horizons through which a more encompassing understanding will emerge. Man today stands in need of a shared-world. This calls for a universal openness of mind. We must now be ready to listen to other world-views which alone will give us a shared understanding in which and through which we can live in such wise that our human lives authentically meet one another. Understanding involves the knowledge of the other with a certain inwardness which makes for genuine respect, recognition and acceptance of that other as a person. Man has lived enough with a wrong relationship which has produced nothing more than a distorted and incomplete meaning. What we need now is a new mode of thinking that will afford us a better common ground of human interaction. Karl Jaspers has indicated the direction that this new mode of thought should assume.

> The unobjectifiable measure of truth of all philosophizing is always the communication which it effects and elucidates. The basic question comes to be this: what thoughts are needed to make the most profound communication possible?
>
> When everything breaks down for me, when I am stripped of whatever claimed to be valid and valuable, I keep the human beings I communicate with or can possibly communicate with. And only with them do I keep what to me is intrinsic being.[1]

For Jaspers, while our rational consciousness at large knows the things given to it, a philosophical thought creates in the thinker the reality of what he thinks about, and this reality is original existential communication. The thought is the force that creates community among true self-beings as distinguished from the founding of a community by interests, powers, and authorities.

In our new civilization therefore we must grow in thought and replace the will to power and control with a will to a more meaningful coexistence men with men. Our world is after all not only changed by technological production but also by the self-productive transformation of man. We must engage in the inner-self activity of a re-examination of where our human power essentially resides. We must recapture our authentic self-hood and transmit its

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[1] Jaspers, Philosophy Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 103.

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power of loving to one another. No one nation may continue to be a threat to another. Earlier, we acclaimed the Western scientific and technological effectiveness of converting the world into a village. But there is something paradoxical about science and technology. On the one hand, they provide us with much good and comfort, while on the other and simultaneously, they destroy us. With their help certain quarters of the human globe claim and boast of attaining a wonderful civilization while at the same time by the very same sciences and technologies the worst forms of savagery are today carried out in the world by the same people. We must rethink our attitude toward these devices and eliminate this internal contradiction. Since when do civilization and savagery combine to form an acceptable whole to a correct thinking mind? We may brag of conquering nature by our development of science and technology but are we not thereby confusing issues? Is it not man himself that is really being destroyed in this confused process? As we saw earlier, for the Africans human life is sacred and must be protected, respected and valued. For them that is the highest form of civilization. Our science and technology must be sacralized, ritualized and cosmosized so as to befit the dignity of our human life. This is what must be the operative intention of all men in our new civilization. The profanity of arms dealing must come to be abhored by all of us. If by any form the will to power and control may appear in our new civilization, it must be only in the form of the power to control and remove from our society that which destroys us. That is the only true power of a genuinely cultured person. We may recall the African's prayer: "I do not know that which takes away life, neither of man nor woman."

We must engage, therefore, in meditative thinking which must sublate and absorb the restless calculative thinking of the scientific world orientation. Meditative thinking is not just a mere theoretical thinking, one that does us no good in our practical communicative human interactions. Rather, by it we transform ourselves, regaining our self-worlds of stratified meanings which root us in Being, Reality or Transcendence. This alone can give us a healthy culture, one in which we can act and relate to one another as free beings whose freedom is to be liberated to be good in loving, respecting and accepting ourselves as members of one human village.

We have demonstrated that Africans owe it to themselves to revive their cultural meanings and values bequeathed to them by their great ancestors and heroes. This revival is an issue in which no African may be found uninvolved. The goals of the revolution designed to achieve a new civilization have always been present in African culture. The intensity with which the colonial powers disturbed these values must be converted into an energy with which Africans must now recapture their traditional heritage and communicate it to the entire world now more open

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to a universal understanding. Africans must now re-enact the consciousness of their cultural Wehood and Familyhood relationships. As we saw earlier, they are the cultural structures from which the African derives personal self-value and the esteem of others as human beings. We already have quoted Julius Nyerere extensively in regard to our conviction that our world-wide new civilization must be similar to the tradition which has begotten the Africans. To re-enforce this theme, we may now cite that part of the Republic of Plato which we enthusiastically endorse.

> Socrates: When any one citizen experiences some good or ill chance, the whole society will make the joy or grief its own, naming it 'mine.'
>
> Glaucon: In our society, everyone will all the time be (463-5) meeting a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, a son, or a daughter in everyone he comes across.
>
> Socrates: Very good, but it will not be only these 'names' he uses to them but the acts and behaviour as well. And the cause of that will be this way of having women and children in common [concern].[2]

It should be noted that in this part of the dialogue, Socrates has proposed the question of whether there is any worse ill for a state than to be divided or greater good than being united. He goes on to state that the chief cause of division is the development of a situation in which citizens no longer refer to the same things when they use the word "mine."

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[2] Plato, Plato's Republic Book V, edited and translated by I. A. Richard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 94.

> But when they [the citizens] all do this then the state is most like one man. If one finger is wounded, the complete system of connections stretching from it to the controlling soul undergoes the pain together and we say the man has the pain, though it is only his finger which is damaged. So again his pleasure.[3]

This ideal of community, we would like to emphasize, is the goal of the African cultural life-style. African Elders have upheld it to this day. Thus, the African 'elites' of the present day have within their own tradition the only true model of life by which they may be authentic rulers in their society. Only by espousing this ancient tradition can they claim to represent authentic African culture to the rest of the world. As for the latter, this model is the only true mirror in which they can view Africa and Africans if the understanding which is the primary purpose of our hermeneutics of that culture is to be achieved.

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[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

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